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THE CHURCH AND THE SEX QUESTION

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BY

JOHN W. COUTTS, M.A.

MILNGAVIE, DUMBARTONSHIRE

LONDON

JAMES CLARKE & CO., LIMITED

9 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C. 2

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TO

MY WIFE

Printed in Great Britain.

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are hereby heartily made to the following authors and publishers for their kind permission to make use of quotations to illustrate or enforce the argument of this book : Mr. Douglas Goldring and Messrs. Chapman and Hall for the extract from " Nobody Knows "; Mr. J. A. Spender, and Messrs. Cassell and Co. for a quotation from " The Public Life " ; Messrs. Macmillan and Co. and Sir James Marchant (editor of the Report of the National Council of Public Morals) for the evidence quoted from " The Ethics of Birth Control "; Bishop Gore, Lord Dawson of Penn, Lady Barrett, and Sir William Beveridge, K.B.E., for their kind permission to use the evidence so quoted ; Messrs. Allen and Unwin, for the extracts from Mr. A. G. Tansley's " The New Psychology and its relation to Life " ; Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, for the quotations from the late Principal Denney's volume on II Corin-

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J.W.C.

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The man who was scientific enough to see that the Holy Ghost is the most interesting of all the hard facts of life got easily in front of the blockheads who could only sin against it.

George Bernard Shaw.

THE CHURCH AND THE SEX QUESTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

MANY a shrewd blow has been struck of late at the delusion that mankind is of necessity upon an upward progress. Thinkers as diverse as Dean Inge and Bernard Shaw have contributed to shake the somewhat somnolent satisfaction with which it had been generally assumed that progress is more native to man than retrogression.

The old-time believer was fabled to have derived much satisfaction from the blessed word Mesopotamia ; the modern half-believer had replaced it with the blessed word Evolution. But when Archæology reveals the existence of ancient civilizations with systems of sanitary plumbing not greatly inferior in complexity to our own, and at least a rudimentary knowledge of telephony, civilizations which ran their

course thousands of years ago and descended into the abyss, quite ordinary people begin to perceive that there may have been something after all in Kipling's warning, doubly impressive when coming from one so steeped in the pride of Empire, that our own pomp may yet be one with that of Nineveh and Tyre.

And even the most unreflective found it difficult, among the complicated horrors of more than four years of world-war, to assume as complacently as they had once done, that man's upward progress is inevitable and assured. Poison-gas, unrestricted submarine warfare, and the strangling of the life of half a continent by rigorous blockade does not suggest even to the most optimistic that man is necessarily progressing in anything that is specifically and characteristically human. They suggest, rather, retrogression towards beastliness and Tophet. It begins to dawn on the least enlightened of minds that Kipling's warning had something in it; that so far from our civilization being necessarily more durable than that of Nineveh and Tyre its total destruction was within an ace of being accomplished; that another collective exhibition of insanity by the

peoples of Europe will unquestionably bring all that remains of our pre-war civilization toppling about our ears in cureless ruin.

The common man, befooled by the mystical idea of evolution as necessarily tending, irrespective of the conscious and intelligent co-operation of human intelligence and will, to inevitable betterment, has awakened with a start to find that he was indeed living in a fool's paradise ; that he is as much in danger of death and damnation from a misunderstood Darwinism as he had refused to believe he was from a misunderstood Calvinism. And this sort of death and damnation he can understand ; for he has seen them drawing near on Flanders' fields and in the slums of his overcrowded cities.

He is naturally turning with some degree of irritation to his alleged masters, political, scientific, and ecclesiastical, to ask why he has been led into such a morass, and what, if any, are their plans for getting him out. In short, the question " What must I do to be saved ? " is once again a burning question. And there is nothing metaphorical or other-worldly about the meaning applied to the word salvation. It is indeed

salvation "here and now," as evangelism has always put it, that the modern world is seeking.

The Church answers, as it has always done, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; but is still apt to forget, as it has often forgotten, that it is only half-quoting the apostle; he added "thou shalt be saved *and thy house.*" For it is nothing less than a complete salvation that Christianity is empowered to offer; salvation for society as well as for the individual; salvation literally here and now in a sense that the older evangelism perhaps only dimly apprehended, for it means salvation from war and slums; from rickety children and prostitution as well as from the pains of hell and the loss of God's presence. For these things make a hell of human life and mean the negation of God.

Can the answer of the Church be put in such a way that the modern world can understand it and be made to see that it covers the need and meets the questioning of the world? I believe it can; but only by those who have taken pains to understand the accent of the world in putting its question, "What must I do to be saved?";

only by those who can so present the ever-living Christ as to enable the world to see that in Him alone the whole movement and desire of creation to have life and to have it in ever greater abundance finds both its full explanation and expression. Man must learn to interpret the biological drive of creation in terms of Jesus Christ if it is to become fully conscious of the sole law of its further progress.

In order to make intelligible to itself the upward drive of creation, ever striving towards the creation of new, more complex, more highly adapted forms of life, biology has indulged in two great and supremely useful simplifications. It has bidden us see life in its earlier forms driven forward by the irresistible urges of Hunger and Love. Life desires its continuance and it desires its transmission. All living things must eat and they must produce their like. Under the dread urge of Hunger biology has made us see the struggle for an ever-increasing fitness, those forms of life which succeed in securing suitable and sufficient sustenance tending to grow and to develop at the expense of those which fail in adaptability or courage. The spots of the leopard,

the stripes of the tiger, the neck of the giraffe, and equally the hand and the brain of man, are thus accounted for in their purely biological aspect. They are means of combating Hunger ; of assuaging the thirst to live.

But this self-regarding instinct is coupled with, and in time modified by, the other-regarding instinct ; for the will to produce others like oneself, carried on at first by a mere process of sub-division, soon produced in the biological tree of life others who were different in structure and function. The emergence of sex is seen to be a cardinal factor in the web of life ; and to it the biologist traces the beginnings of song, of beauty, of care not only for a partner in life but for the young lives that spring from mating. " Male and female created He them " ; and biology is not behind Genesis in awarding a place of primary importance to that new development in the story of creative energy.

But when these twin factors had resulted in the production of man a new factor was introduced. Perhaps it would be truer to say that a factor dimly present and growingly important all the way became more consciously operative.

With man there came a greater power of recognizing the uses of Hunger and Love, of meeting them in a spirit of greater intelligence, of controlling them for other than purely selfish ends. But there came also the power of abusing them for his own purposes, so that the much derided fall of man is seen on a calm view of history not to be so much a childish legend of Genesis as a statement of historical fact applicable to all men and to every civilization.

The "evolutionary" conception of human history as an inevitable progress towards something finer and nobler is not in accord with fact; rather is the story one of repeated new beginnings, flawed, marred and continually ruined by man's inability to control for the purposes of the common life the twin driving forces of Hunger and Love. Every civilization that has perished has gone to wreck on the rocks of greed and lust; man has sought for himself alone what should have been put at the service of the race. The biological drive towards the satisfaction of Hunger which gave speed to the antelope and wings to the bird has produced in our own day the multimillionaire, the Imperialist nations, the decadent

civilizations of the West on the one hand ; and the unemployed, the city slums, the dispossessed and exploited nations of Africa and the East on the other ; for man's greed to possess has outrun his capacity to use and enjoy. So by a biological necessity life is choked and killed rather than increased by superabundance for the few and want for the many. The biological drive towards the satisfaction of Love which gave its song to the thrush and its plumage to the peacock has produced in man the uncontrolled spawning of our city populations on the one hand ; with disease and barrenness on the other ; for man's power to love has outrun his capacity to control and enjoy. Between the ruined civilizations of the ancient world and the fast perishing civilization of our own there stands One who said, " I am the Way, the Truth and the LIFE." To the biological simplifications of Hunger and Love He added God. Hunger and thirst after God will always be filled, He said. Love God, and of necessity your love to man will be a finer and nobler thing. And in His own life and death and resurrection He put into the hands of the race of men, if they will

use it, the answer to the imperious questions which Hunger and Love are always thrusting upon them.

For man, He said, the urgency and drive of the great twin forces that are ever moulding and shaping life must be looked at with regard to man's end and aim, which is not to be simply the most wondrously fashioned of the beasts, but to be increasingly a son of God. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means that we believe in the purpose of God to make all men His sons ; that life exists for that great end ; that the processes and forces which mould and shape life must be judged by their conformity to, and used for, the perfecting of that inclusive aim. If men so believe they shall be saved, they and their house. It is a collective, social salvation that is offered ; one of which it is impossible to think in merely individualistic terms ; for the whole thought of Christ revolved round a God, Who being Father, thinks of His sons always as members of His great family.

It does not fall within the province of this book to suggest the way in which Christ's answer meets the questions arising in our modern

world from the drive of Hunger. Unemployment, sweated labour, the results of a merciless and over-driven competition between man and man, firm and firm, country and country, with all their results in the seething discontent of our time are dealt with in two other volumes of this series.* What is attempted here is an elucidation of the urgent questions which arise in connection with the drive of Love, with its source and beginning in the sexual constitution of the human race, with its flowering into marriage and the life of the family, with its decay and disillusionment, resulting in the rupture of the life of the home, and with its function in the life of the Christian Church as the appointed means for moral pressure and recovery. Concerning all these things men are vocal and clamorous to-day. They want to know what the Church of Jesus Christ makes of these truly vital questions. It is my deep-seated conviction that they have a right to an answer ; that until it gives an answer at once courageous and unequivocal the Church will fail in interpreting the mind of Christ to this generation.

* The Story of Social Christianity, F. H. Stead (2 Vols.).

CHAPTER II

SEX

Because it is the means of handing on the lamp of human life sex has always and everywhere played a part of transcendent importance in human affairs. A frank recognition of its importance is one of the first requisites of a healthy and balanced social order. If a country's life and civilization are mirrored in its great literature, there was no lack of such frankness in Shakspere, in Milton, in Swift, and in Wordsworth. Different as is their greatness in other respects they are all alike in this ; they are as frank about sex as the Authorized Version of the Bible.

But when we come to the literature of the last century we are conscious of a profound difference in tone and treatment. While sex remains a dominant motive of poetry and fiction there seems to be a tacit agreement, broken only by the alarums and excursions of the early Swinburne,

that sex must be handled with infinite discretion : that any reference to the physical factors in sex attraction or antagonism, any representation of the material stresses and strains which are the inevitable accompaniment of man's attempt to give spiritual significance to the sex difference which he shares with so many of the animals, was regarded as taboo. A " Hush-hush " policy prevailed all along the line ; the most celebrated instance of this now generally recognized fact being the monstrous suggestion of a firm of publishers that Huxley should produce a text-book on Physiology for schools and carefully leave out any mention of the method by which human life is reproduced. The male grossness of Falstaff and the female directness of Juliet were equally alien to Victorian literature. The underlying theory in literature and life was that sex was an impolite subject, that the less that was said about it the better, that there must be some inherent vulgarity of mind about those who sought exact knowledge on such a theme.

In consonance with this theory went the distressed ignorance and consequent prurient

curiosity of children on a matter of such natural and vital concern ; the embarrassment of parents in their attempts to bolster up this conspiracy of silence ; the connivance of teachers and ministers in what was an obvious treachery to their professed duty of enlightenment ; the subterranean methods of obtaining and elucidating the facts, often in the most debasing and corrupting way ; with the consequent results in hypocrisy, sexual perversion and distortion of life, and an inheritance of physical and moral distress which has led not unnaturally to the fierce revolt against the entire Victorian tradition ; a revolt which characteristically overlooks much that was great and strong in that tradition co-existing with much that was evasive and cowardly.

The end of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century have seen this revolt develop into an anarchy which presents one of the most vital questions and one of the most salient opportunities to the Church of our day.

The new outlook on sex questions has been the product of many combined forces. First

we may reckon what is roughly described as the *feminist* movement. There are some actions which do indeed speak louder than words, and among them may be included the action of Nora when she slams the door upon her husband and children at the end of Ibsen's "Doll's House." It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the reverberations of that slammed door, first heard on the English stage in 1889, have gone on echoing and re-echoing through the length and breadth of our country ever since. The claim was then explicitly made that woman has a right to the development of her personality and therefore necessarily to the control of her person to an extent that may, in certain cases at any rate, make the care of the children for whom she has made herself jointly responsible, and much more obviously the care of her husband, comparatively negligible concerns.

Absolute equality for man and woman even to the length of disrupting the marriage bond and leaving the children to anyone who cares to look after them—that is the logical conclusion of Nora's slamming of the door ; and perhaps it is not putting it too strongly to say

that most of those who have thrilled with sympathy at her gesture of independence have not taken the trouble to think out where it will land them ; or to ask where it landed her. For while the old three-decker novel, now so greatly derided because it ended with marriage bells and "they all lived happily ever after," may justly be accused of leaving us in the lurch just when the most intimate and difficult problems of sex begin to emerge, yet Nora's after career gives one some cause for thought. Does slamming the door solve the problem ? Is there any gain to human society in the assertion of an independence which negates responsibility for past acts ? These are questions that will recur as we proceed. Meantime it is important to note that the development of feminist activities in this country along various lines can, with no great inaccuracy, be dated from Nora's shut door and the emergence of a new frankness both in literature and in life with regard to sex.

Politically it was pushed as the demand for the vote ; pushed by all sorts of women and all sorts of methods ; by some women who wished

to share in the responsibility of governing the State ; by some who wished to share the irresponsibility which they regarded men as enjoying in affairs of sex ; by methods that were dignified and constitutional and gave point to the claim that women were as well qualified as the mass of men to exercise the franchise ; by methods also that were subversive, not only of traditional ideas as to what was proper and becoming in the public actions of women, but subversive also of our national sense of decency in argument and the limits of fair-play in harassing and defeating opponents. The use of these latter methods was, to the careful observer of our national life, of more than merely casual importance. It has left after effects in a readiness of resort to unconstitutional means of agitation which may make the granting of votes to women an epoch in our political life very different from that state of equalitarian bliss which the promoters of the agitation either expected or intended. The broad fact, however, remains, that partly as the result of their skilful and unprincipled agitation, partly as a result of the new forces liberated by the war, the vote has now been

granted, with certain restrictions, to women, and everything points to all restrictions being removed at a not too distant date.

The instrument has therefore been put into the hands of women by which legal equality in matters of sex may ultimately be gained ; though the small number of women hitherto returned to Parliament and the slowness with which Parliament can therefore be permeated with a specifically feminine point of view suggests that women in the mass in this country are still more indifferent than the suffragist agitation supposed to the exercise of political pressure as a method of asserting the rights of their sex.

But whatever may be the political result of the enfranchisement of women, one of its most obvious social results has been the shattering of the taboo attached to discussion and ventilation of questions concerning sex. The age which has heard these things debated from innumerable platforms, freely discussed in the House of Commons, and argued interminably in the real forum of the people's shaping mind, conversation in all ranks and classes of society, is moving in an atmosphere more like that of

Shakspere and Swift than that of Tennyson and Mrs. Hemans. The broad point to take for our present purpose is that the feminist agitation with regard to the vote and the political position of women has had its great contributory share in producing a new frankness with regard to all questions of sex.

Perhaps even more powerful has been the contribution made by the novel and the drama. With the single exception of Meredith the great novelists of the nineteenth century regarded sex in the main from the point of view of tender, domestic sentiment. Thackeray's Amelia and Dickens' Dora were regarded as suitable embodiments of the "gentler" sex, as it was then the habit to call women; though the mulish stupidity of Amelia and the muddled household economics of Dora often cause the modern reader to wonder how Dobbin and David Copperfield managed to retain their patience with them so long and so successfully. Brains were no proper part of a woman's equipment unless she were to be a vampire like Becky Sharp, or a girl of dubious attractiveness like Beatrix Esmond. Between such women and the really "nice"

girl, fitted to make a proper heroine, there yawned an unbridgeable abyss.

So far as George Eliot allowed her own feminine acuteness of perception to free her from the prevailing tradition she gave us something more like a recognizably real woman in Mary Garth and the active, shrewd, thoroughly competent Mrs. Poyser ; whose immortal epigram that " God Almighty made the women to match the men " carried more dynamite hidden within it than Victorian readers supposed. But when George Eliot seriously essayed a portrait of a woman fit to be in brains and capacity true mate to a man she only achieved the bluestocking Romola, and made her more than a match for Tito Melema by making him considerably less than a man. The Victorian convention on the whole, then, was to think of sex as merely the romantic prelude to love and marriage ; of woman as mainly, if not solely, potential wife and mother ; and of the relations between the sexes as satisfactorily covered by an ideal of tranquil domesticity. Where passion emerged outside these relations it was in order that it might be reprobated as suitable to the

chosen world of the Becky Sharps and other such low characters ; or exhibited as the irretrievable blunder and life-long catastrophe of the Little Emlys and Hetty Sorrels.

One sometimes wonders what they really thought about it all ; Thackeray, whose married life was shadowed after twelve years by the incurable insanity of his wife ; Dickens, who managed to fall in love with all the sisters of one family and is generally credited with having married the wrong one ; George Eliot, painstakingly exhibiting to the world how entirely possible it was to be extremely moral and virtuous while living with another woman's husband. Surely they had thoughts which have not found adequate expression in their novels ; thoughts that went beyond the useful, but conventional, ideas of good and bad women, of love that was blessed because it led ultimately to the Church of England marriage service, or cursed because it was without benefit of clergy.

All honour to the Victorians because they saw and upheld with such clearness the view that there is in the normal relation of the sexes a binding element which must not lightly be

discarded ; that there is between the sexes an interplay of complementary qualities which makes each attractive and necessary to the other ; that upon this attraction the fundamental loyalties of human society have been deeply and mystically laid, so that those who play fast and loose with it do harm and damage that spreads far beyond their own immediate lives. But when this is said it must be admitted that their handling of sex left out great tracts of human experience which in an age both franker and less fastidious were bound to find expression.

That expression has come with full and devastating flood in the novels and plays of the end of last century and the first quarter of this. In its very nature as a protest and a rebound it presents us with an almost passionate denial of our Victorian assumptions. Woman is thought of, not as a gentle and domesticated creature, whose natural ideal is that of the warm fireside and a regularly recruited nursery, but as an independent being with as much right to a separate existence and a career in life as man. So far from being the passive recipient of man's impetuous wooing she is, according to Bernard

Shaw, the prime mover herself in the initiation and establishment of sex relation. And because, by what seems to be regarded as an unforgivable freak of nature, she has to endure the main burden of the natural consequences, she is to be entirely free to choose whether such consequences are to ensue, or whether they shall be avoided.

Similarly it is for her to say whether the relation established is to become permanent, semi-permanent, or merely occasional. So far from being the inevitable ideal of a woman's life, marriage thus becomes an optional accompaniment to sex relation ; women who prefer to have a husband and children being graciously permitted to exercise their choice so long as it remains convenient or pleasurable for them to do so ; the easy way of escape or divorce being the alternative when such relations no longer appeal to them as agreeable. There may be women fashioned for a life-long devotion ; but if the usual novel by H. G. Wells, or any other of a score of modern novelists, be taken as guide, they are very few and far between ; and the ideal of sex relation not obscurely held up to us in much modern fiction and dramatic writing is

that of absolute sexual freedom, equality with a vengeance, for the woman is to be free as the man. The abolition of the double standard, which was made much of during the political agitation by the feminists, is now seen not to be, as some of us had old-fashionedly thought, that man was to be held to as strict an ideal of personal purity before marriage and strict monogamy after marriage as the woman, but that the woman is to be as free to indulge her personal desires before and after, or without marriage, as the man.

This may seem to present an exaggerated view of the extent of the revolt from the Victorian ideals of sex relation ; but it is exaggerated only if it be taken to represent the existing state of opinion on the subject. What may be definitely stated as fact is that the mass of our people read books and see plays containing these absolutely anarchical views of sex relation, views which, were they actually put into practice, would reduce the moral condition of the country to that of a rabbit-run within a couple of generations ; they recognize the element of hardship and difficulty in existing relations which make these views seem plausible ; but they also recog-

nize dumbly yet surely that this cure is worse than any disease ; that in reaction from the imperfectly stated views of an earlier day our modern writers have overreached themselves and are quite certainly provoking a reaction that will be swift and determined.

The thing is its own cure ; for in writers still obsessed with sex one begins to perceive a note of satiety and weariness ; the fumbling after some way of escape from a life in which sex thinking and indulgence have run riot.

In so intensely modern a book as Mr. Douglas Goldring's " Nobody Knows," one of the women delivers herself of the following piece of excellent good sense :

" It's all wrong, Gilbert. I just hate this newfangled nonsense about marriage being hell and women being slaves and all that. Of course it's hell and I'll tell you why. It's hell because of three things which are common to both sexes, selfishness, ill-temper and bad manners. They're all curable ; but the divorce court won't cure them ; it never has and it never will. Love's a thing that grows slowly and has roots and can stand wind and weather. I believe to make a success of your love life is just about as difficult as to make a success of your art. In both you have to put in a deal of collar-work to get your good moments."

Such a straw shows how the wind is blowing ; and we may leave the modern novelists and playwrights for the moment, merely noticing what has been our purpose in introducing their crude and half-baked ideas ; that they have served to add to the ferment of general thought and discussion on questions of sex and the part they play in the general life of our people.

A second important factor in aiding a new frankness in discussing questions of sex was undoubtedly the Report of the Venereal Diseases Commission. All doctors, and most ministers and teachers, had long been aware that one of the worst and most immediate results of the policy of ignorance with regard to sex was the existence of a mass of disease and suffering, entirely preventible, resulting from illicit ways of procuring sex gratification. Sharing with alcohol, the other potent race poison, the grim distinction of being physically disastrous in its transmissible effects, it had lurked in a fashion in which drunkenness could not do behind the veil of secrecy and the unwillingness of men and women, especially women, to consult a qualified doctor with regard to its results, either

personal or hereditary. The growing interest in the welfare of children, one of the most truly Christlike features of the life of the nineteenth century, had led all thoughtful people to rage against the stupidity of the conspiracy of silence which here reached its maximum power of social damage and individual tragedy.

The publication of the Report of the Venereal Diseases Commission, ghastly as by its very nature it was bound to be, was yet a most righteous and powerful stroke in defence of the ignorant, the suffering, and those yet unborn. It revealed to many not only the existence of a social virus of which they had been quite unaware, but also the clamant nature of some more frank treatment of the problems of sex which would at least make it impossible for young girls and lads to blunder into a physical error which might have results so profoundly disastrous not only for themselves but for their children.

It is doubtful whether the findings of the Commission are even yet as well known as they ought to be ; but it is at least something gained that in the publicity of our great cities, by advertisements in cars and in the public press, the offer

of information and treatment is made in a way that defies the whole policy of silence. Whether notification of the disease be made compulsory or not, a matter on which there is legitimate difference of opinion, at least its dire character, its sole cause, and its cruel consequences are now within the easily accessible knowledge of our population ; and this must be reckoned as a further factor making for the open and honest treatment of all the questions that emerge in the handling of sex.

To these two factors must be added a third ; the immense stimulation of interest in sex questions, the incalculably great emancipation from former conventions effected by the War. We who have lived through it, sharing or suffering its unassimilable experiences while they were in progress, cannot expect to assess with any justice the precise overturn in human valuations that has undoubtedly resulted from the War. We who survive, " rari nantes in gurgite vasto," can only begin to see some of the widespread ramifications of that vast interference with the ordered habits and attitudes of our pre-war civilization. But it may be affirmed with con-

fidence that among its most obvious and most enduring results has been its effect on the relations of the sexes in our own country.

There was, to begin with, the immediate emergence of an opportunity for women which they seized with courage, high seriousness, or pure levity according to their moral make-up and disposition, an opportunity to take their place beside men in many callings and occupations which had hitherto been denied them. The strong disposition of many women to refuse to see in wifehood and motherhood a satisfactory career, hitherto confined to a comparatively small section of the women of our land, now received an incalculably great reinforcement ; and while the war-work of women will be variously estimated, according to standpoint and experience, its effect upon the minds of women themselves can hardly be over-estimated. Whether they made shells or served in Government Offices ; whether they helped to run local V.A.D. hospitals, or got nearer to the fighting line as W.A.A.C.'s and W.R.E.N.'s, a vast number of the women of our land had the experience which, in the main, they undoubtedly found

to be exhilarating, of working at tasks which had hitherto been regarded as proper to men, and in many cases of working alongside with men.

One certain consequence was the emergence in the minds of some women, and the fortifying in the minds of others who had possessed it before, of an ideal of companionship between the sexes in all the work of the world which, however it compares with the Victorian ideal of domesticity, is at least a very different ideal of sex relationship. The palpable result of this is visible in the youth of our generation, even in that part of it which was too young to share in the actual tasks of the War, which only dimly apprehended its reactions from the non-comprehending stage of school life at which it had then arrived. It is the slackening of the hold of sentimental ideas of sex relation and the feeling after something more like that of chumship, or "palliness," which exists between lads at the adolescent stage of experience. The gain in positive knowledge of the other sex seen, not in the light of sentiment as possible lovers, but viewed merely as fellow-workers and friends, has probably been one of the gains

of the wartime experience which will work for honesty and sympathetic comprehension between the sexes. In any case it makes, as surely as other things already suggested, for the total disappearance of any taboo upon the free discussion or ventilation of questions of sex, and ought to be grasped as one of the nobler and more beneficent possibilities of our confused time.

Another aspect of the War in its effect upon men and women alike is more perturbing ; and yet the realities of our situation to-day are not being faced if some consideration of it is left out of account. There can be little doubt that the mental and moral upheavals of the war, the grim " bending up of each corporal agent to the terrible feat " of victory, caused something in the nature of a landslide in the natures of many who took their appointed share in it. No one who has served alongside of them can have any satisfaction in saying anything that seems belittling about the men who did so valiantly, so resolutely, the great and terrible things which the collective insanity of Europe called upon them to do in Flanders and on the Somme. But no honest man can deny that amongst the other degrada-

tions of war it intensifies the lure of sex to what for many men is an intolerable craving ; and no one who saw them will ever forget the lines of men who waited, with the pathetic and dumb patience that they displayed in so many other ways, in the streets and lanes of France to bestow the might of their wronged and stifled manhood upon hired women.

The ordinary civilian who had entered the army at the compulsion of his own patriotism, or by the will of an endangered State, must have found many causes for mystification in the goings-on of his superiors ; but none was probably more mystifying than the conjunction of a supply of padres and medical officers who, differ as much as they might on some questions, were usually at one in bidding him keep his manhood for some girl at home whom he could always honour, and the toleration of establishments expressly designed to make that impossible. How much of the brooding and sullen moodiness of some of our ex-service men is due to the remembrance of things not in the line, but behind the line, that they would give much to have blotted out ?

As unquestionable in its evidence of the moral laxity inevitably engendered by war was the tone of our stage during the war years, when nothing was too frivolous or licentious to pass muster as a means of a brief forgetfulness ; the revelation of the kind of life lived by many of those who were supposed to be devoting day and night to a prosecution of the war that has since been made in the publication of intimate diaries and the unsavoury disclosures of the law courts ; and that merely anarchic attitude to the whole rationale of sex which has been indicated above as one of the dominant notes of our contemporary fiction.

Nor, when an endeavour is made to compute the results of the War in this connection, can there ever be forgetfulness of the alteration of balance between the numbers of marriageable men and women, directly caused by the loss of life, limb, and capacity to earn a livelihood. While Nature tends to provide a fairly equal ration of male and female births, the tendency is always for a somewhat greater proportion of males to die before reaching adult years. When to this normal discrepancy there is added the loss

of the large number of men who would have become husbands and fathers, the resultant strain that is bound to accrue, that has already begun to make itself evident among the marriageable women of our land is seen to be among the most real and most severe of war's massed offences against a good social existence. Any tribute to our brave dead, emerging now into a new sincerity as we begin to surmount the international follies that accompanied the making of peace, ought to be accompanied by a tribute to the countless women whose hopes were slain with their lovers on the field of war, to the growing girls who can have little expectation of finding, should they desire it, the fulfilment of life in marriage and motherhood.

One of the most obvious reasons for deploring the levity with which sex issues are handled in much contemporary fiction is that the minds of girls and younger women may easily be deflected by it to an attitude of licence in sex relationship which would have been less likely to lay hold upon their minds in days when normal relations prevailed between the marriageable of both sexes. It is easy for a social

observer to note already signs of a new mentality in the girls and younger women of to-day. In some there is a new seriousness which envisages life as an opportunity for service in which the devotion that would normally have flowed into private and domestic channels is deliberately yielded to more public ends ; in others, especially of the better wage-earning class, female clerks and typists and the like, there is a care for dress and an obvious expenditure upon it which suggests that old-fashioned saving with the hope of a subsequent home of their own has been almost deliberately abandoned in favour of the immediate satisfaction won by a fastidious care of personal appearance and bodily elegance ; while in yet others there are evidences of a response to the most anarchic pronouncements of our irresponsible advisers. Is there not a clamant duty here for responsible advisers, and more particularly for the Church of Him who made the bruised reed of the human spirit His peculiar concern ?

Perhaps there might be reckoned as a fourth factor in the production of a new outlook and attitude to questions of sex the mental movements

and speculations which are roughly grouped under the titles Psycho-analysis, or the New Psychology. Although the work of Freud was known and closely studied by mental experts in this country before the War, no one could have anticipated then the strange and almost riotous popularity which it has experienced since the War. With its extension of the sphere of " sex " (a term which Freud uses to cover practically the whole of life's interests) ; with its description of life as a mental struggle between conflicting groups of " complexes " ; with its insistence on " libido," or desire as the mainspring of most of our action ; with its bold attempt to plumb the mysteries of " the unconscious " as " the cage into which we put the things that have become dangerous " ; with its ingenious efforts to bend the structure of our wildest and most farcical dreams to its own purposes, it has been avidly seized upon by the more facile of our fictionists as providing the very instrument needed to give an appearance of scientific precision to their anarchical theories of social and sexual life.

All our social evil is the result of repression, our complexes are an evil inheritance from days

when men and women did not dare to be free, the repressed "libido" or desire can obviously be got rid of only in one way, by expression; and the means taken to find that outlet are secondary and irrelevant. In other and plainer words the art of life is to let yourself go, quite irrespective of the results to others and ultimately to yourself. Put in that way it is not new, and hardly deserves the respectable appellation of psychology. It is the modern version of the old refrain: "Ye shall not surely die; but ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil."

What has happened has been that the work of uncomprehending novelists has really put the fool's cap on an earnest scientific endeavour to evaluate the contents of that vast hinterland of man's thinking and willing power which the "older" psychology had already defined as "the sub-conscious." Anyone who has made first-hand acquaintance with the work of Freud will realize that the popularizing of it in contemporary fiction has presented an entire parody of it and will re-echo the caveat of Rivers in his "Instinct and the Unconscious." "Freud's psychology provides a working hypothesis de-

signed, like every hypothesis, to stimulate inquiry and help us in our practices, while we are groping our way towards the truth concerning the nature of mental disorder. We can be confident that the scheme as it stands before us now is only the partial truth, and will suffer many modifications with further research, but that it takes us some way in the direction of truth seems to me certain. If this value of Freud's theory were only a probability, or even only a possibility, are we justified in ignoring it as an instrument of the better understanding of disorders of which at present we know so little? Are we to reject a helping hand with contumely because it sometimes leads us to discover unpleasant aspects of human nature and because it comes from Vienna?"

These are the words of truth and soberness, and already, in the work of later exponents, the hypothesis of Freud has been so modified that an open and candid mind has little difficulty in seeing that along the lines of the "new" psychology a good many of the processes of normal minds have received illumination from similar processes carried on in minds that are

distinctly abnormal (thereby only carrying a stage further the previous results of research by "alienists," i.e., those who make a particular study of extraordinary mental conditions). The existence of "complexes" is seen to be just one of the ways in which the inheritance of the race for good, as well as for evil, is stored in the individual mind; the conflict between various sets of complexes is grasped as just a modern variant of the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde motive, which is as old as man and received its most penetrating treatment at the hands of St. Paul; the resolution of the conflict is seen to be possible not only by giving full rein to the "libido" (which may, and indeed does, provoke a new and embittered conflict) but by "sublimation," which the Christian knows under the simpler and more human guise of "the expulsive power of a new affection."

It is not necessary to believe that our infant child's dreams and "phobias" (nightmares) are necessarily the result of nascent sex desire to believe that there is something worth pondering in Freud's theory. It is only necessary to believe that because sex is so pervasive of the whole

of our bodily make-up, because the sex-differentiation is so powerful an agent on physical and mental states from the very earliest years, because its mishandling by the child, as well as by parents and teachers, may be so productive of evil and complicating results in later life, it is worth considering a theory, or any of the later and more modified forms of it, which endeavours to throw some light on the origin and growth and methods of canalizing, or using for good and not evil, one of the most powerful determinants of weal or woe in individual and social life.

It is not necessary for our purposes to go any further into the "New Psychology," or those consequences of it, at once painful and diverting, which have masqueraded in credulous circles under the aegis of unqualified practitioners of "psycho-analysis,"* but what is germane to our present consideration is that this whole business is, through novels and newspaper articles and general conversation, very much "in the air." It provides one of the contemporary aspects of the whole question of sex, and serves

* The interested should consult Rose Macaulay's novel: *Dangerous Ages.*

further to strengthen the main thesis of this chapter that because of all these and other factors the old taboo upon sex has utterly broken down, that what is taken for knowledge with regard to it is being supplied in a multitude of ways, some of them highly disastrous, and that therefore there is the clearest call to the Christian Church to formulate and express its own view with the utmost clearness and definiteness. That there is need for positive teaching few, I imagine, would be prepared to deny. That there is a longing for it which would surprise the timid or the sceptical, I am stoutly prepared to assert.

What then is the Christian attitude to sex? If we have substantiated our thesis that it is a vital question of the hour, what is the answer of the Church, and how is that answer to find full and satisfactory expression?

To begin with, it may not be unnecessary to state that the answer that has sometimes been given by the Church has not always been a fully Christian answer. No one can read Augustine, or the later Latin theologians whom he so profoundly influenced, without feeling that there is

in the view of sex which has dominated the Western Church ever since an element which came rather from Augustine's pre-Christian contact with the sexually rotten society of Northern Africa in the fourth century of our era than from the teaching or spirit of Jesus. The pre-eminence given to sexual sin, its substitution for disobedience of the known will of God as the cause of man's alienation from God, the natural preference for the celibate life thereby created, the dualism between flesh and spirit which was an inevitable consequence, and the suspicious regard in which the body was held, all these things which have persisted since the Reformation into much Protestant thinking are an inheritance rather from the Church than from Jesus ; and one of the first necessities of our present position is to turn back to Him to see what interpretation His life and teaching put upon the fact of sex.

In attempting to do this it may also not be unnecessary to state that it is in its relation to the whole teaching and spirit of Jesus that this, like all other questions, can alone be satisfactorily viewed. In the discussions which have been

carried on upon this theme too much can be made of isolated sayings of Jesus. While we eagerly welcome these as casting light upon His mind it ought never to be forgotten that He expressly disclaimed the rôle of law-giver ; that His whole teaching is one long caveat against the literalism which would make a single word of His decisive ; that when He said " the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," He meant what He said. This implies that we cannot seek the mind of Jesus upon any isolated subject without having some more general and overruling conception of His aim in all He said and did.

Perhaps it is not understating that aim to use the old words : " The Son of God became man, in order that the sons of men might become the children of God." That is the fundamental aim of Jesus ; to make us fully into sons of God. And the Church, which is His Body, exists to bring men and women into that sonship. This means that in the aim and purpose of Jesus everything in human life is treated from the point of view of its bearing upon the creation of a true filial relationship between man and God. It is

in the light of that purpose that we can alone rightly interpret Jesus' quotation of the Old Testament word : "Male and female created He them." He accepted sex as God's ordinance for human life. He thereby implied that there is nothing in the sex-relationship, as such, which debars men and women from communion with God and enjoyment of a right relation with Him.

This would seem to dispose at once of all theories of sex which make it the supreme barrier to a life of holiness ; of all those modern theories which make it a mere intrusion and irrelevance in human life, so that it comes to be regarded as a nuisance ; of all theories also which make it into the Sphinx of human life which puts unanswerable conundrums and destroys the unsuccessful candidates. There cannot be a surd, or irreducible irrationality, in the dealings of a Father God with His children.

If it is a God-given ordinance for human life, then it must be capable of treatment in such a way that its terrific urge can be used for growth in sonship to God ; it must be capable of making positive contributions to the life of the spirit.

This implies that all merely negative and repressive handling of it is fundamentally wrong and unchristian. And the frankness with which Jesus accepted it and handled it dismisses as equally wrong and unchristian the policy of evasion, the conspiracy of silence against which we have seen our age to be in revolt. If sex is something that pertains to us as children of God then by no possibility can its frank and reverent discussion be an impropriety, nor the desire of children to be informed about it dismissed as a prurient curiosity.

Much can be gathered, again, from Jesus' attitude to children themselves, as possessing, naturally, the mind that is characteristic of the Kingdom of our Father. It has often been pointed out that in the Gospel of St. Mark the blessing of the little children follows immediately upon Jesus' pronouncement that the surrender of men and women to one another in the completest form of sex relation involves life-long consequences (St. Mark x, 1-16).

If God's desire for all His children is that they should come to know themselves His, and if He has so ordained human life that these children

only come into existence as the result of the complete surrender to one another of the bodies of men and women, which He has made the temples of His Spirit, then in the act by which He mediates through them something of His own creative power, whose result is to produce beings having in them, according to Jesus, the very mind and temper of God's Kingdom, in that act there is nothing which ought to be a subject of embarrassed shame. It is by the misuse of men and women, not by the intention of God, that the sacred act of procreation should have become the subject of filthy jests, the chosen theme of the comic spirit at its least remedial task. Not upon those who desire, however mistakenly, an honest dealing with the facts of sex, but upon those who have sought to bury them out of sight and thereby suggested that in them there is something essentially unclean, must censure fall. For all such are really implicating childhood with their own dark imaginings, and, with whatever supposed interest of morality at the back of their mind, accusing God of not knowing how to manage His own world.

But a further step into the mind of Jesus can

be taken when we recall His dealings with women as representing one part of His assertion of the ultimate worth of every individual human soul. Because He started out from the thought of all men and women as being, at least potentially, children of God, Jesus consistently taught and acted as though every human soul had infinite worth in the sight of God. From that there followed His persuasion and insistence that no human being is to be used simply as a means to another's gratification ; each soul is an end in itself. To this persuasion is due the new place that He gave to women in His teaching ; the new honour that His Spirit has everywhere exacted among men and women striving to be Christian.

It is a commonplace that among a people which had enshrined in its very prayers thankfulness on the part of a man that he had not been born a woman, Jesus made no difference in exhibiting, and so far as He was able, exacting, the same respect for women as for men. He talked as readily to a woman who was a Samaritan (and therefore under a double taboo) as He did to His own disciples ; and their surprise is a measure

of His originality. He counted the two sisters in the home at Bethany as equal in friendship with their brother. He accepted the devotion of women as readily as that of men. He found greater faith in an alien woman than among His own people. He forgave the sins of women, not excepting sexual sins upon which a world mainly ruled by men had been so hard, as readily as He forgave the sins of men. He reminded the male accusers of one such woman that if they were seeking justice rather than vengeance they should step down into the dock beside her. He said that the personality of woman is as sacred as that of man ; so that even to think of her merely as a machine, or as a means for the gratification of appetite, is to have wronged her and hurt oneself.

He came in the might of His living Spirit to reassure a woman as to the powerlessness of death upon their friendship ; and in the constitution of His Church, when His Spirit was powerfully operative upon the hearts and minds of His disciples, the names of women, including that of His own mother, take rank with those of men. It is true that He called no woman to

follow Him ; that He numbered none among His apostles. That may have been due to His perception of a real difference between the tasks to which men and women are called in human life; it may equally have been due to His perception that the time was not yet. Whatever the reason, the fact cannot be rightly used to deny to woman any opportunity which the world now affords of developing to the full her capacity and her full measure of personality in realizing her childhood to God ; for it is implicit in everything Jesus said and did that with Him and in Him there was, as Paul said, " neither male nor female."

The bearing of this on all questions of sex is profound. It undoubtedly implies an equal standard for men and women in sex relationship, so far as that is compatible with what may be found to be essential and insurmountable sex difference. It implies equal rights in all that goes to make up full personality, and the claim to be in the most entire measure a child of God ; but it also implies equal responsibilities. (In this, as in other connections, those who have clamoured for equal rights have not always perceived that rights mean corresponding duties.)

Because of the radical nature and comprehensive reach of the sex difference these rights and responsibilities may also differ ; and one duty of the Christian is to keep his mind open to the varying directions in which equality before God may have to assert itself.

There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus either on economic or personal questions of that purely barren equalitarianism which makes havoc of human life by crushing all endowments and both sexes into one monotonous plane of endeavour. Jesus always remains true to life in asserting that equality before God does not necessarily mean sameness ; and as He elicited a different response from tax-gatherers and fishermen, and imposed different duties on both, so also He elicited a different response from men and women, and quite conceivably imposed different duties upon them also. Equality in the Christian life means that no soul must be debarred from finding a full and satisfying life in sonship to God. That may very conceivably mean different duties, satisfactions, and ends for the lives of men and women, the one " end " alone remaining the same. That can only be a matter

for personal experiment, the method of trial, error and return being, to my mind, of the essence of God's method of dealing with us as children.

And this suggests a further consideration with regard to Jesus' whole approach to our life. Because He thought of us as God's children He was able to combine, as none other, a rigorous ideal which we who follow Him confess has never been realized save in Himself, with a limitless forgiveness and a divine patience. Nothing will satisfy Jesus for us but that we should be perfect as God our Father; and yet, by the divinest of His paradoxes, He rejects none that come to Him, and will accept a child of God, as such, at any level of filial craving and obedience, however slight in attainment. It has been well said that "our whole task as Christians is to become what we are." We are sons of God; yet we wait for the adoption. We are redeemed; yet our redemption draweth nigh. This thought, whose potency and promise has been clearly grasped in some reaches of Christian life, makes a profound difference to our practical thoughts of sex and to the judgments we pass upon those who

obviously fail to approximate to the full Christian standard.

I do not think it is too strong an assertion to make about Jesus that with Him attitude counted for more than attainment. It was the *direction* in which men and women were looking that was the thing that mattered. Otherwise how could He have spoken such words of grace to the woman that was a sinner, and dismissed as a curmudgeon the impeccable Simon? "She loved much" counted more for Jesus as an indication of the final trend of a character, of its final place in the family of God, than the passionless respectability which depended on its negatives and its abstinences for standing in the sight of God. In considering the accommodation to man's final destiny of his, as yet, so very partial understanding and so largely inefficient treatment of the fact of sex, the thought of Jesus that we are all on a journey in discipleship; that none of us has reached the topmost rung; that discipleship may be discerned by the sympathetic eye at a very low stage of Christian development; that because we are children we still have the imperfectly co-ordinated passions and controls of children;

this thought seems to me to open up a large vista of mutual understanding and forgiveness and co-operative effort to relate the facts of sex-experience to the total life-history of the souls of men and women in their journey to God.

For, further, it must be stated most emphatically that Jesus regarded sex as a servant in the great house of life, and not its master. When we read, however sympathetically, the avowals of much modern fiction with regard to those who are caught in the lure of sex attraction, to that disruption of personal energies, family ties, and social order which every honest novelist and playwright is compelled by the nature of the facts of life to represent as a consequence, it is not the strength of the passion of sex, nor the weakness of men and women in yielding to it that surprises. These are within the experience of all of us in our own measure ; it is in degree, not in kind, that we differ, if we differ at all, from the men and women we see thus depicted. What shocks the mind that is honestly striving to be Christian is the acquiescence, or even more markedly sometimes, the sense of triumph with which the resulting catastrophe is rendered. It would

surely seem to be treachery to the spirit of life itself to utter pæans on what is so clearly represented as a merely pyrrhic victory. The downfall of reason, of affection, of all the ties that bind men and women not merely to those to whom they have sworn special allegiance but to that vast unseen company to whom, by being members of a society at all, they have tacitly pledged their honour, before the onset of a single primitive urge is surely a quaint reason for rejoicing, unless it can be conclusively shown that the need of yielding to that urge is necessary and right.

It is not good, as I have indicated, in a general attempt to evaluate the mind and spirit of Jesus, to dwell too much on isolated words of His ; but there is one, so stamped with the mint of His originality, that in this connection it appears to me it ought to have full weight assigned to it. Jesus said once : " There are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb ; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men ; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it

let him receive it." Like every word of Jesus, it has an intensely wide application, when once we get below the letter to the underlying principle. Surely it means that there are great ideal ends for which a man, who wishes to prove the full measure of his manhood, will sacrifice innumerable minor satisfactions, and even some of the most primitive and powerful urges of his nature. Just as Christ demanded of His followers, with no reservation, that they should fear disloyalty more than death, so here He states unequivocally that if the Kingdom of Heaven demands it, a man will willingly endure the privations and losses which some men have had to suffer through nature or the oppressions of society. This means incontestably that sex, like everything else in life, has to take its place of due subordination to the one thing which counts for the Christian, that of attaining for himself, *and others*, all that is involved in sonship to God. What that may be for any particular man none can say but himself. There can be nothing less like the spirit of Jesus than perverting these words into a general recommendation of the spiritual advantages of celibacy ; or using them to suggest that the

unmarried Christian is necessarily more apt for the purposes of the Kingdom than the married; but they do undoubtedly carry quite clearly a condemnation of the idea which alone lends plausibility to much modern writing and thinking that before the insatiable demands of the sex instinct all other considerations must give way.

That the acceptance of them commits all normal men and a great many women to a lifelong struggle is no argument against their use upon the lips of Jesus, or against their spiritual validity. Jesus saw life for us all as a prolonged struggle ; He saw no use or honourable profit in a life which was not based upon courage and the resolution to " mount, and that hardly, to eternal life." It is just that sting and challenge to our loose compliance in making the urge of part of our nature the law of our entire being that marks these words as so eminently like a saying of Jesus.

And their authenticity is immeasurably strengthened when we remember the grave witness borne to them by His whole life. He was of those of whom He spoke. The entire life of Jesus is an assertion not that nature is evil,

or the flesh base, but that nature and flesh are only our implements for fighting our way to God the Father of our spirit, for which spirit nature and flesh provide, here, our medium of expression. It was the ideal of Jesus that nature should ever be more interpenetrated with the purpose and meaning of God, that flesh should more completely reveal and express spirit ; and to surrender the guidance and direction of spirit to nature and flesh is to subvert the whole intention of God, to renounce the glorious liberty of His children, and to become slaves to a partial expression of ourselves. The entire life of Jesus and His sacrificial death are the best commentary on His own words, and on the modern claim that we must obey at all costs the dictates of our sex instinct. It would be impossible for any man to make such a claim in the Garden of Gethsemane, or in front of the Cross of Calvary. No more need be said than that.

If these, then, are the fundamental Christian postulates with regard to sex, that it must be viewed in the light of man's whole purpose, which is to become more entirely a child of God ;

that it is a God-given ordinance for handing on the lamp of life and providing the material for God's family on earth ; that the children who result from its supreme expression are guides and patterns to maturer folk of the mind and spirit of the Kingdom of God ; that with all the subtlety and diversity that are lent to life by sex difference, neither sex is subordinate to the other, but for each the supreme Christian law of personality, with all its rights and responsibilities, holds good ; that with an endless and infinite ideal of perfection the Christian way still includes an endless patience with imperfection and divine compassion for those who have failed to attain ; and that sex, like every other gift of God, is subject to the law of the Cross and is useful only in so far as it serves the ultimate purposes of God in human life ; if these are the Christian fundamentals of sex-thinking, how are they to be taught and applied by the Church of Christ ?

In seeking to answer that question we must get rid of the theory which still haunts a good deal even of Protestant thinking and speaking about the Church, that the ministry constitutes the sole voice and efficient agent of the Church's

mind and life. It is patent that such a view finds no place whatever in the New Testament doctrine of the Church ; that when St. Paul, to whom was given very specially the task of working out a formulated notion of the Church, thinks or writes of it, nothing less than the whole membership with all its powers and faculties and varied opportunities is in his view.

Continually, when people ask with wistfulness or irritation, What is the Church going to do or say about this ? they really mean, What is the ordained ministry of the Church going to say from its pulpits, or in its ecclesiastical gatherings ? Obviously the ministry is ordained, among other reasons, to give guidance and a lead to the Church on all the matters that come under its consideration, and I would be the last to minimize the value of the function to be discharged by courageous speech in the pulpit, wise pastoral guidance of individuals, and deliberate pronouncements by convocations, assemblies, or other similar ecclesiastical authorities. But it ought to be obvious that these are not the most powerful pronouncements of any Church, nor its most potent means of bearing witness to

the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. That is found in the daily witness of its entire membership, in the courage or cowardice, the clarity or muddle-headedness, the earnestness or slackness, with which the rank and file of the Church express their attitude to great questions by their common speech and action.

If this be admitted as a general principle, it carries with it the plain implication that the first and supremest duty in the matter of expressing the Church's fundamental principles with regard to sex, as indeed to most other questions, lies with the parents, by whose volition and act children come into the world, by whose example and teaching their most susceptible period of development is guided and controlled, and by whom, beyond all others and by the very nature of the case, instruction can be given which will carry with it on the swelling volume of the years a tenderness of association, a solemnizing and fructifying wealth of affectionate memory which no other relationship in life can ever hope to rival.

It is high time, in view of the many expositions we have had of late of the repressions and stuffiness and dreariness of the life of children in homes

where religion was regarded as the light of life, expositions not lacking, doubtless, in honesty or point, that witness should be borne as unequivocally to the diametrically opposed results which some of us have experienced, to the fact that no influence in life can rival that of a Christian home. Mr. J. B. S. Haldane, in his brilliant little book, "Daedalus," seems to look forward with complacency to the fact that in less than fifty years' time ectogenesis, as he terms it, will have become the fashionable method of securing human births. By the fertilization of ovaries withdrawn from the women of our land, selected as the best potential mothers, a complete separation will be effected between sexual love and reproduction with a result which he, assuming the mantle of the prophet, announces thus: "The small proportion of men and women who are selected as ancestors for the next generation are so undoubtedly superior to the average that the advance in each generation in any single respect, from the increased output of first class music to the decreased convictions of theft, is very startling" (p. 66).

Over against that view of a painless, passionless

production of small creatures who would belong to nobody in particular (for one supposes that the State which selected the "mothers" would doubtless insist on control over the resulting "children"; one must use inverted commas, for these "mothers" and "children" would differ so totally from any of the beings we have known under these great names) let us set a tribute by a great poet to his own mother:

"Blest the babe
Nursed in his mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his mother's breast; who with his soul
Drinks in the feeling of his mother's eye!
For him, in one dear presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
Hath beautified that flower; already shades
Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears
Unsightly marks of violence or harm."

Wordsworth's lines may seem tame and old-fashioned to a generation nourished on coarser and more highly seasoned fare; they may be none the less true for all that. It is the basal fact of life for many men and women that in the sacrifice of their own mothers, in the sheltering care of their own fathers, the deepest and truest thoughts and feelings they have ever experienced came to them ; that so far from being a mere factory of repressions and inhibitions their early home was the creative source of all that has made life a big and wonderful experience for them ; that by its lights, even when they were not as dazzling and polychromatic as some modern ones, they have found a not uninteresting road open up before them.

It must be patent to any Christian mind that when Jesus deliberately took Fatherhood as the deepest and best symbol He could find for the heart of the Eternal ; when He compared His own agony and bloody sweat, His own Cross and passion to the sacrificial pains of motherhood, He was investing the home, and the early, even the unconscious years of childhood, with a dignity and an awe which will abide so long as

men take Him for a reliable guide in human affairs ; so long as to any human souls He makes good His claim to be The Way, The Truth and The Life.

Such speculations as Mr. Haldane's are an evidence, if such were needed, to show just how far a brilliant intellect can misguide in those matters which are still so often hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes. It is precisely because of the cost of motherhood and the price of fatherhood that the early years of every life lived in a home where they are honourably paid, exceed, as all psychologists now tell us they do exceed, in impressiveness and lasting power upon the imagination and the will, all subsequent years of life. Mr. Haldane may rejoice to see afar off the dawning of that ectogenetic day when motherhood will cost nothing and fatherhood will have become a subject of amused or embarrassed speculation, but plain folk, who constitute the vast majority of our race when all is said and done, will feel that they owe more to a home that may have been pitiably lacking in scientific accuracy of thinking, and even deplorably confused in much of its

positive instruction, than hypothetical generations yet unborn are likely to owe to a State-supervised créche, in which the selected mothers might presumably be allowed to come sometimes to see how the machine-fed, machine-taught bantlings were faring. It will be the invincible persuasion of many simple people that God knows His own business better than Mr. Haldane; that fatherhood, motherhood, and the home, institutions based deep in the unfolding life of millions of pre-human generations, and expanding into the most potent force to the life of either the individual or society, have behind them a drive which is not likely to be enfeebled by the discoveries even of a Reader in Biochemistry in the University of Cambridge.

It is precisely because the home has such enormous power; because the actual relations existing between husband and wife, felt though uncomprehended by small children, have such a pervasive effect upon all after-life; because the force of early instruction, foolish and repressive, as well as wise and liberative, is so enduring, that the

true defence against foolish and dishonouring depreciation of the home is resolute attack in the shape of using the priceless years of early childhood to give true and sanative impressions.

No one will contend that the whole physiological truth with regard to sex can be imparted to children of tender years, or that it should be, even if it could. But a wise father and mother can do much both to defend from error and to prepare for a reception of the truth. Surely it is time, for example, that when a new baby comes to a home, and older children are naturally exercised as to the how and wherefore of it, all parents with any smattering of common sense and any degree of Christian desire for the welfare of their children, should stamp for what they are the idiotic fictions of " the doctor's bag," and the solicitude of the " stork " to add to our families. These are idiotic fictions because they have in them no possible relation to the truth which one day the child must know.

It is surely an axiom of education that when, because of immaturity of mind, the full truth with regard to any subject cannot be conveyed,

then some form should be chosen which shall be capable of being developed into the truth, without any shock to either mind or imagination afterwards. To tell small children, for example, that babies are the gift of God to the love of their father and mother, to teach them George Macdonald's well-known poem, with its high imagination wedded to spiritual fact, is to ensure them against the violent break in their mental process which is involved in the discarding of some totally unrelated fiction, and to prepare their minds insensibly for a subsequent reception of the truth in the right atmosphere, that of solemnized wonder.

As children grow, much can be done by all parents, even should their knowledge of nature and its ways be very limited, by teaching their children to observe the wealth of nature's life which lies behind and carries within it an explanation of the fact of sex in its physical aspect. It is not necessary to know a great deal of botany to explain the fertilization of many kinds of flowers and so to prepare children for the thought that life can be originated by the contact of one living germ with another. Even in town, where

living flowers as they grow are hard to come at, and many birds and animals are only to be seen stuffed, in cases, at museums, there is still the possibility of explaining to children the nesting and pairing of birds in the parks and open spaces where they play ; and for those fortunate enough to rear their children in the country the common face of nature can be made to speak remember-able things to boys of far less than Wordsworth's poetic sensibility.

Surely it is not without its significance that just at the hour when the demand for frankness and honesty in sex matters has become, as I think, irresistible, the patient labours of science should have put into the hands of all those who care to know enough to wield it an instrument by which that knowledge can be both simply and efficiently given. For from flowers and their fertilization by winds, and insects and bees, to birds in their mating and the development of the maternal and protective instincts, to mammals and the prolongation of the life of the young inside the body of the mother, and their subsequent dependence upon her for nourishment and on the father for pro-

tection and guidance, it is an easy road to travel with the quick and delighted minds of children.

All who have tried it know with what absolute naturalness it is possible to pass on to speak of the similar derivation of human life, equally plain yet equally mystic, and how, without the slightest suspicion of *mauvaise honte*, or any mutual embarrassment of parent and child the rightful desires of the child to know about this great theme can be abundantly satisfied. No one who has not attempted it with children can know how simple it all becomes when it is tackled in this way, and how common sense and beautiful and satisfying to the child's mind is such an account, related to the whole natural process of which he knows himself a part, of how he came to be.

The physical facts are thereby set from the first in an ethical and spiritual setting : they are connected in the child's mind with his mother's love and sacrifice, with his father's guidance and friendship, and it is not too great a claim to make to say that the whole subsequent attitude to sex is modified, exalted, and solemnized by the

setting of the home in which the child's own life has been cradled.

In the early years of a child's life such simple instruction will be satisfying and adequate ; but when the great watershed of adolescence is approaching, when to interest in his own existence there begins to be added the first faint physical intimation that he too carries the mysterious power of handing on the lamp of life, wise parents will wish to be beforehand with explanations that will meet the inevitable bewilderment of this second crucial stage. It is too late when adolescence has actually commenced ; for most men who are honest enough to speak about their experiences at school, whether public or private, will confess that long before that stage knowledge in its most debased form, and in some cases, the chains of perverted habit in thought and practice, had been acquired.

It seems the natural thing that a father should undertake the instruction of his boys, and a mother that of her girls ; though there may be cases when one parent may conceivably have the wisdom and tact for both. Probably in such cases it will be the mother. A boy should be

plainly told of the new possibilities that are now coming into his life ; told of the long period that must elapse before these new possibilities can have their fulfilment in marriage, and for those with requisite knowledge this is a good opportunity for pointing out that what is purely instinctive in the animal world has gained ethical and spiritual implications in human life, so that the mating of man means something different from the mating of birds and beasts ; he should be warned about the dangers of self-abuse and the extreme desirability of keeping his growing manhood vigorous and untainted ; and if his devotion to his mother has been that of the normal and wholesome boy, his thoughts of the other sex should be definitely attached to what she has meant to him, what some possible mate may mean to his children in time.

With girls the physiological change at adolescence is so much more marked, if unexplained so much more alarming and perturbing, that all the wisdom and sympathy of the mother are needed to prevent this time being the forerunner of emotional storms, nerve crises, and altogether strained and exaggerated views of

sex. The new psychology has done good service here in bringing out into the light of day the practically innumerable examples in our modern life of girls and women whose lives have been largely ruined by ignorance, or by realizing the physical facts of sex in some sudden, shocking or brutal fashion. The physical aversion from the mere thought of sexual intercourse, the accompanying loathing of men, the hysterical and neurotic attitude to the fundamental facts of our physical existence which mark the minds of so many modern women are due in many cases to their sheer mishandling at this critical stage of their development. The burden which their own life constitutes to themselves, and the trouble they cause to other people, whether as imaginative and excitable spinsters, apt victims of every passing craze and foolish fancy, or as unresponsive and overstrung wives, might have been lifted and eliminated from life had they been sensibly and honestly told something about the basal sex differences when they were still young enough to learn.

Obviously such a frank and wholesome handling of the crisis of adolescence is beyond the

competence of many of the parents of our time (though it is one's sure hope that it will not always be so) ; and where parents feel themselves utterly incapable of the discharge of their proper duty, they may find it possible to enlist the service of a wise and genial family doctor already known and respected by their children. I emphasize the qualifications ; for mere medical knowledge of the facts is not enough to make sure of a proper handling of them.

To the instruction given both in school and church, also, parents ought to be able to look more confidently than they can at present, for valuable aid in the direction of a proper perspective in these matters. In a well equipped modern school, or in a decently taught Bible class, these subjects ought not to be ignored, or burked. They ought never to be made the occasion of special instruction by teachers specially introduced for the purpose ; as that at once suggests the very thought of their being something out of the common run, something fenced by mystery and taboo, which it is most important to avoid. But in the normal course of lessons a Christian teacher has many opportunities of

impressing the incalculable importance of a right attitude in sex matters, and the teacher of a Bible class cannot, without cowardice and shirking, evade the issue presented by the lives of the patriarchs, the sin of David, the social teaching of the prophets, and the New Testament epistles. Surely the Old Testament presents the ideal opportunity to a good teacher for bringing home such seed thoughts as the divine intention in the differentiation in sex ; the slow growth of the perception of monogamy as God's ideal for His children ; the social confusion and distress arising from a low conception of family life ; while the New Testament at once suggests the immense enhancement of the position of women given by the gospel of Jesus ; and the working of that new leaven of sexual purity in the Pagan atmosphere which surrounded the early Church.

As an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory, it may be permitted to me to state that in addressing mixed classes of adolescents (girls and lads from 14 to 19 years of age) for the last fifteen years I have never hesitated to grapple with such subjects, as also with cognate themes

like the appeal to the chivalry of lads on the ground of what their mothers have meant to them, and to the idealism of girls on the ground of the potential motherhood resident in them ; the duty of the lad to keep himself clean and fit for the mate that may be his ; the equal duty of the girl to be courageous and self-surrendering for the comrade and children that may be hers. In no single case have I encountered that would-be demureness of mien, or that suppressed sniggering which would suggest that such teaching was felt to be indecent. On the contrary, there has always been that marked hush and sense of almost strained attention which falls upon a group of listeners when the speaker is touching something that all feel to be of vast and most immediate importance. The truth is that the work has already been half done for us by the interest which the urge of nature has given to these things ; our task is only that of courage, intelligence and sympathy in the handling.

To the work of parents and teachers can then be added that of ministers ; and this seems to me the natural order both of time and of importance. For the preacher will make but a poor job where

his audience has had little home and school training, or where the training has been of the wrong kind. But if he build on foundations that others have well laid he can add in the pulpit those wider reflections on what makes for social solidarity and a good life for all ; he can and ought to use the dispensation of the sacrament of Baptism as a means for urging upon a whole congregation the mystic co-operation between God and human beings in the upbuilding of the Church on earth, the importance of a due recognition of the child's place in the life of the Church, and therefore of a solemn honouring of the sex distinction by which the succession of Christian generations is secured. He ought to speak much about home life as the hiding place of man's power, and show how no strong and enduring life in Church or State is possible where its sanctities are profaned. He cannot escape, unless he be a coward, the plain implications of preaching over the Commandments, or the teaching of the prophets, or the compelling words of Jesus.

Difference of opinion is legitimate as to the extent to which questions like prostitution,

venereal disease, birth control, can profitably be handled in the pulpit, at any rate at present, while so much disingenuous concealment masking itself as modesty abounds in his congregation. But in some way or another, in conversation, in the discharge of his duty as a spiritual director of souls, as a member of church courts, as a watchman on the walls of the national life he will feel compelled to find means of utterance.

It ought to be remembered also that in the work of the Church there is increasingly provided an opportunity for that "sublimation" of sex energy which is seen to be of immense importance at the adolescent stage, and in those growingly numerous cases where sex life cannot find its natural fruition in marriage and the life of the family.

Every congregation which has a soundly conducted Primary Department in its Sunday School is not only tackling the sex question at the right end by filling the minds of little children with germinal thoughts gathered from the beauty and wonder of God's ways in nature. It is also providing a number of adolescent girls and lads with just that diversion of sex energy in the

mimic parenthood of their small class which is the very thing calculated to set their sexual thoughts and nascent longings in the right way. The other-regarding instincts are being unconsciously roused ; and in their care for the little ones, surely one of the most affecting and wholly right things in our modern congregational life, they are being protected, without their knowledge, from some of the strains and stresses of that intensely difficult time.

The same thing holds true of the work for others which the Church to some extent provides for those at a later stage, to whom the accidents of life, or temperament, or social status, or a thousand other things may have denied happy and satisfying sex relation of the most intimate kind. The hunger of heart of many a childless woman has been stilled to some extent by the work that she has given to a troop of Girl Guides, to a Sunday School class, or to a district for whose visitation she has made herself responsible.

It has been well pointed out by Crichton Miller that the problem of discovering successful forms of sublimating the sex urge is one of the most pressing in our modern life, which makes

the possibility of marriage very remote for so many of both sexes. He says, " Modern society makes heavy demands on the sublimating power of its members ; and their happiness and social efficiency are largely bound up with its successful exercise. In particular the choice of occupations needs to be considered in the light of sublimation. If we compare domestic service with the work of a barmaid it is obvious that the former occupation offers considerable opportunity for the sublimation of the " home-making " group of instincts ; while the latter offers very little opportunity for any useful form of sublimation at all." He then goes on to suggest that nursing provides an almost ideal method of sublimating the maternal instinct, as in it the relation of the helpful to the helpless is so finely expressed ; while in the life of the typist, or the girl worker in a factory there is no aid whatever given to the sublimation of deep-lying sex instinct.

This needs very thoughtful consideration by the responsible persons in the Church ; not only in so far as they may be able to influence those who are seeking a career in life, but also in raising the question as to whether within the

Church itself enough different kinds of work are open to men and women who might find in it something of the satisfaction that they need. When we remember the young men in our congregations who cannot possibly marry on their exiguous incomes ; when we remember what was written above concerning the great number of girls whose hopes of marriage and a home of their own have been for ever blasted, it must force upon us the question as to whether we have done nearly enough to find suitable ways and means of self-expression in the work and service of the Church. Ministers may not connect the number of break-downs and hysterical collapses that they have observed among, let us say, the girl clerks and typists in their congregation with the suppression of a deep-rooted instinct ; the very suggestion would be scouted as indecent by the persons most intimately concerned. But that does not alter the fact that the increasing spread of " nerves " in modern life may have its root just here.

Now what can the Church do to minister to these minds diseased, and pluck from their memory a rooted sorrow ? It ought to be able

to offer a far greater variety of service than it does at present. It is obvious that Sunday School teaching, singing in the choir, and visitation are at present of immensely greater significance to those who take part in these activities thoroughly, than they themselves probably realize. But there are members, both male and female, to whom none of these activities appeals.

The Roman Church, with its instinctive appreciation of the needs of hard pressed human nature, has provided alleviations in the way of solemn and sensuous ceremonies with which we of the Protestant Churches do not specially wish to compete ; but it has also provided brotherhoods, orders, sisterhoods which may well make us ask whether there are in our churches nearly enough " whole-time jobs " for the talents and energies that we are allowing to run to seed. The prompt appreciation by the best type of unmarried women of the creation in our Scottish Churches of an order of Church Sisters and Deaconesses is enough to suggest that along this line much more might be successfully attempted. The magnificent response given to V.A.D. work

during the war by hosts of untrained or partially trained girls also suggests that in peace time girls who have some leisure from their bread-winning avocation of typing or the like, might be able to give organized help in a district to mothers with scant time for all the work of their household, or even to act as unpaid assistants to overworked district nurses, to give a hand in local and cottage hospitals.* Such suggestions would involve for their working out a co-operation between the churches and local authorities, which at present hardly obtains ; but I am confident that the Church which was able to offer to any authority or organization (especially in smaller towns and country places), a body of willing assistants would not find as a rule that it was rejected.

Within the Church itself something might be done by the more systematic and skilful linking-up of individuals who have time and a need for helpful self-expression with others in the same congregation to whom their aid, not in money or gifts, but in time, work, and sympathy would

* After writing the above I learn to my deep satisfaction that something of the kind is being attempted in Aberdeen.

be most valuable. At present the ministry is overburdened with a multiplicity of tasks which it is discharging, of necessity, inefficiently. Would not the call upon the whole membership to realize the true conception of a congregation's life, that of fellowship, discharge a triple function? It would help those who sorely need it, provide a means for self-expression to those whose ordinary tasks are not sufficient, and relieve the ministry for its more proper functions.

But when all has been done that the Church can do, it is quite obvious that there will remain a vast amount of sex energy that is still unsublimated, uncanalized in other directions. This is not wholly an evil; for Tansley has well pointed out that "the effort to divert the whole available energy from the primitive outlets leads at best to a one-sided development of mind and character and often to overt disaster in later life."* We all know and resent the merely negative primness of the woman who seems to have been born an old maid; we all rejoice in the heartiness of the woman who, though she has not married, has kept the instinct of sex alive.

* *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, page 82.

This means that for many, indeed for all, there will be struggle to keep the urge of sex, with its profoundly strong inheritance from a nature that needed to be more fecund than man, in its due place in life. Tansley, in the work just quoted, dealing with the ways in which "the stable-minded type" and "the unstable-minded type" (convenient, but possibly unreal ways of distinguishing our complex human temperaments, which will hardly fit into these neat pigeon-holes), handle the conflicts arising through sex-urge ; the stable-minded by locking them away in "emotion-tight barriers" and the unstable-minded by seeking to repress them until they cause either neurosis or outbreak, says : "There is of course a more excellent way of dealing with the conflict than either of these. If the mind is flexible and can adapt itself to experience as well as being sensitive to it, if it can endure conflict, even involving the most acute and long-continued psychic suffering until the conflict has fought itself out, then it will eventually attain a harmony and peace which is impossible either to the stable type with its rigid barriers separating the mind into compartments, or to

the unstable type with its repressions and neuroses."

It is precisely the claim of the Christian Church that in its gospel of a Christ who lived and died and rose again to show Himself as our Brother and to lead us into true sonship to God, there is the aid which we need in adapting ourselves to experience and enduring conflict. Since the classical case of St. Paul untold millions have re-echoed his conviction that what they could not do of themselves they learned to do with Christ strengthening them ; that while of themselves they felt they would have been tied for ever to a body that was dying, but not dead enough to have ceased to trouble them, they were assured through Christ of ultimate victory and deliverance. They could thank God, as he did, through Christ Jesus. The preaching and the living of that gospel are the greatest contributions that the Church has to make to any question ; and the question of sex is no exception.

But along with that, with its ultimate ideal of a mind released from conflict, living in the happy acceptance of God's will, there must always go in the Church the divine compassion of Jesus for

those who have fallen by the way, or failed to attain. The Church's ministry is like that of its Master, a priestly ministry ; and it shows His spirit when its ministers and members "show compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way ; seeing they themselves also are compassed with infirmity." In the Church of Jesus, when it is true to Him, there will be no harsh condemnation for the lad who has not learned to resist the lure of sex ; only sympathy and the effort to teach him control and the regaining of his manhood ; there will be no excommunication for the unmarried mother, or blight upon her innocent child ; rather a desire to understand and to make the burden easier to carry ; no stones for the woman taken in adultery, but instead a compassionate endeavour to help to mend three broken lives, and where there are children, to shield them from the worst consequences of others' wrongdoing.

With a greater honesty in instruction, a greater frankness in facing the facts, there will also come a deeper understanding and a diviner compassion ; considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted ; considering Him, who is a merciful

high priest in things pertaining to God, able to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE

In criticising for the *Saturday Review* a play put on the boards in November, 1895, Bernard Shaw wrote : " Like all romantic plays which create a strong illusion, this one irresistibly raises the question how its final situation would do for the starting-point of a realistic play." Nothing could suggest more neatly or acutely the changed attitude of the time to the question of marriage. It had been regarded as the natural end of the romantic play ; it is increasingly regarded as the beginning of the realistic play. From the sound of wedding-bells and " they all lived happily ever afterwards," with which the novelist or dramatist was wont to conclude his work, the tendency for many years back has been to make marriage a beginning rather than the end, and to portray in the drab colours of what is considered to be realism the gradual

fading of the romantic passion, the inevitable disillusionment of the happy pair as they find that old Mother Nature has played a trick on them ; then either the hardening into mutual toleration, with an honourable attempt to find satisfaction and build up a new bond of interest in the life of the children, or a revolt which is represented as entirely justifiable, more especially on the part of the woman, and an endeavour to find in freedom of search another object of a devotion that is, each time, to be tireless.

Perhaps the most able, certainly the most incessant proclaimer of this attitude to marriage is H. G. Wells ; of whom an urbane American writer has not unjustly observed : " I retain a strong impression that most of his novels of contemporary life challenge the idea of an indissoluble marriage. I retain also the impression that one tends to derive from these novels a conviction that everyone's first marriage is a mistake. His works disquiet me, because I think the defect which his heroes and heroines find in their first marriage they will also find in their second and their third and their fourth ; they will find that neither the second nor the third

nor the fourth marriage is capable of sustaining indefinitely the sense of ecstasy which the tired business man experiences the first time he notices how pretty his stenographer is."* It may only be added, in justice to H. G. Wells and other writers of the same type, who are honest enough to carry their realism to its full length, that they would probably be prepared to admit this ; that indeed their own works suggest that tedium and misunderstandings begin to arise in the new relationship as readily as in the old ; that the element of illusion is as profound in irregular ties as in those that have had social recognition ; that here, as elsewhere in human life, there may be temporary relief, but no lasting solution, in flight.

There is profit in all this for those who desire to find a Christian answer to the vital question : What constitutes true marriage ? rather than to bolster up conventions, romantic or other. There *is* an element of illusion in romantic love, which truth-loving people have always readily admitted. Men and women who had thought to love " for ever and a day " find that there was reason for

* Stuart P. Sherman, *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1924.

Rosalind's scepticism (how modern Shakspere was in attributing it to her rather than to Orlando !) "Say a day ; without the ever." Stevenson was right in urging upon youths and maidens that "marriage is not so much a bed of roses as a field of battle" ; the high and honourable field of contention for the abiding things of human character. But when so much has been admitted, must we inevitably pass to the conclusion that the process described as falling in love is mere illusion ; that it forms the worst possible avenue to successful marriage ; that it would be better for us to have sensible matches arranged by middle-aged parents ; or that men should buy their wives, not covertly as they sometimes do in this country, but openly, as they do in many parts of Africa ; or that we should betroth our children to one another in infancy, as is done in India ; or that we should revert to promiscuity and polygamy, in the fashion of many primitive peoples ?

One fact that seems to be patent about the reaction from an over-sentimental view of marriage, as being by its very nature the cure of all pre-marital ills, instead of being by its very nature

one of the severest tests of weak and unworthy characters, is that the alternatives to our present system are not faced as unflinchingly, as realistically. If they were, it might emerge that in decrying romantic love, in jeering in effect at the solemnity of personal choice which lies at the root of it, the more hard-bitten realists of our time are doing something analogous to committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. Is it not in effect a modern form of that sin to turn our backs upon that which has been the spring of our greatest poetry and art, since, within the bounds of Christianity, something like a true place began to be assigned to woman ; to stop our ears to that noble note which began in the days of chivalry, which made the burden of Dante's grave strain, the pitch of Shakspere's many-coloured art, the passion and the flower of Shelley and of Keats ?

It is incontestable that all this has flowed from the higher position gradually yielded to woman as wife, mother, and inspirer of the high thoughts and deeds of man. If now the claim is made that the Christian ideal carries with it the more inclusive thought of woman as comrade and

fellow-worker, does that mean that the older view must inevitably be abandoned? It would be a poor equivalent for woman, grasping at the possibilities of a new status and a more adequate ideal of complete self-expression, if she were seduced into abandoning the high possibilities, both for herself and for her children, which exist in a rightly conceived monogamous marriage based on the teaching of Jesus.

Recalling His fundamental principles, we see that marriage ought to be regarded by Christians in the light of God's purpose for our entire life, which is that we should enter ever more fully into our Sonship to Him; that one of its aims is the handing on of the lamp of life, unchoked and undimmed; that its purpose is powerfully affected by the children who result from it; that within its bonds and obligations the full rights of personality are to be expressed and respected; that it forms an opportunity for the exercise of mutual forbearance and forgiveness; and that it comes, like every other human activity, under the law of the Cross.

It must be obvious that the reason why marriage so often fails, comparatively or abso-

lutely, to reach the divine intention for it, is that these fundamental Christian ideals are ignored in its inception and in its progress alike. There is nothing in the thought or speech of Jesus to suggest that there is any golden rule by which mistakes in the choice by a man and woman of a mate may be avoided ; but there is the clearest intimation that the choice, when made, should be regarded as final. When He sets the seal of His approval on the Old Testament declaration that man and wife constitute one flesh, He explicitly sanctions the idea of an indissoluble and life-long union as being that which normally meets the divine intention in making man and woman diverse and complementary.

This means that something more than a romantic attraction, or the urge of sex-desire, or the natural longing for comfort on the part of man, and motherhood on the part of woman, is requisite for a Christian union. It means that both partners have viewed one another and have thought out their future relationship, so far as that is possible without actual experience, from the point of view of their own and their united relationship to God. Where that has

been done, is it not likely that the voice of nature will also be found to be the voice of God? that a strong mutual attachment, springing up in the unplumbed recesses of two personalities, having reasons of its own which defy analysis or statement, being in the fullest sense a faith rather than a knowledge, will contain within it a better assurance of things hoped for than a union regulated by other people, or a mercenary contract, or a "common sense" marriage?

No purpose is served by denying that in that strange sense of mutual attraction and desire which precedes most decently happy marriages there may be an element of illusion. The reality of marriage is admittedly a different thing from the equal reality of courtship. Passion, by its very nature, is an evanescent thing and must burn itself out. But if it be rooted in something deeper and stronger than itself, then something more serviceable to the race, something more enduring, will spring from its ashes. That something is already contained, implicitly, in the motives that lead to a Christian union. For if a man and woman regard one another not merely as desirable members of an opposite sex, but as children of

God, their union cannot exclude, even from the very beginning, the thought that it has a bearing far wider than that on their personal lives.

Tansley has said, "The completest human being is he who can find not only in the individual beloved but in humanity itself an object of his tenderness, associating the tender instinct with the service of the herd as the lover associates it with the service of the beloved."* One usually finds that the poets have been there before the men of science, and what Tansley says in his rather arid and forbidding way, Shelley had already sung more persuasively :

> "Whose eyes have I looked fondly on
> And loved mankind the more."

Where this element is present and reckoned with from the outset, the coming of children as the natural and desired result of marriage will provide that first extension of sympathy, love and service for others, which in human life is seen to be the true interpretation and justification of the sexual urge. The joint care of and devotion

* *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, page 282.

to their children is already, in untold cases, the means by which those who have begun with the predominating thought of self-satisfaction as the end of marriage have been led out insensibly to a wider and more inclusive, and therefore more permanently satisfying view.

It is the most radical defect of all the crude notions prevalent with regard to marriage in our day that they so utterly fail to begin to do justice to the problem which any form of free-love, group marriage, or promiscuity raises concerning the children. In the teaching of Jesus children are among the world's chiefest spiritual treasures ; and the working of the Christian leaven has been nowhere more perceptible than in the new value and worth that has gradually come to be assigned to them.

The question still remains unanswered ; when Nora slammed the door, who took on the care of the children ? It is among the most patent of facts in real life that an enormous number of marriages which were not suitable or promising to begin with, have been steadied and pulled round to something like a satisfactory basis because man and wife found a new spring of

affection in caring for their children. And in cases where marriage has gone to inevitable ruin, because it lacked a Christian start and a Christian continuance, will anyone deny that the children of such a union have found in their dubious position, in the unnatural atmosphere surrounding their birth and training, in the equivocal circumstances in which they were bound to find themselves often placed through no fault of their own, a most serious handicap to achieving either a happy childhood or a right attitude to their subsequent life ?

It will not do for those who grow so eloquent in novels and plays about the admittedly hard case of the unhappily married to fob us off with no constructive thinking on this essential theme. If they propose fundamental alterations in our social structure we have a right to know what they propose to do about the children who are not merely the children of these unhappily mated parents, but the future fellow-citizens of our children, and the children of God.

When we come to the Christian pre-requisite in all thinking about marriage that it should involve a mutual respect for each other's per-

sonality, we probably touch the very nerve of the whole modern unrest and trouble of thought. It is the wholly justifiable claim of feminism that woman should be treated as possessing the entire rights of individuality, often foolishly pressed and driven to wrong conclusions, that yet makes the gravamen of the charge against the still existing view of married relationship.

No one who has read John Galsworthy's "Forsyte Saga," can forget the impressiveness with which Irene's largely mute indictment of Soames Forsyte is pressed home upon him. The claim that a woman has full rights in her own body and that to overbear them is the part of a brute rather than a man is one that commands a full Christian assent; though Galsworthy admits in his preface that the truth with which his characters have come to life under his patient handling has been too much for a one-sided view of the matter; so that Soames too is seen, even in the novelist's despite, and one judges, quite against his intention, to be an object of sympathy. For Irene despised and wronged his personality, when for the sake of comfort and a home she married him.

Hence the imperfect nature of the solution in

that classic record of our perplexed age. The instinct for justice cries out that it is not fair that Soames, brute and bully as he had once shown himself to be, should writhe unendingly in the hell of his own unsatisfied desire, while Irene, despite the tragic ending (as conventional, when all is said and done, as anything in the despised Victorians) should find sanctuary and satisfaction with young Jolyon. Galsworthy is one example among many of the fact that the most biassed feminists are often men ; the beauty of his own creation, Irene, makes him unjust to Soames ; ideal justice demands, and life as a matter of fact extorts, punishment from all who wrong the personality of another.

The demand which Christianity everywhere makes for mutual forbearance and unlimited forgiveness is nowhere more insistent than in the intimacy of the married relation. Probably nowhere is it less completely found ; and the reason may very well be the profound ignorance which has hitherto existed on the part of either sex of the physiological and psychological make-up of the other. Tansley has well said that a sympathetic understanding of the differences

between the sexes would be " the surest available precaution against inharmonious and disastrous marriage " ; and this is no over-statement.

In the days, not so long gone by in this country, when a husband could say, " you and I are now one ; and I am that one," and the wife in a multitude of cases acquiesced, no overt problem arose as a result of the conflicting wishes, opposed desires, and disparate physiological reactions of a married pair ; though no one knows the amount of covert tragedy, of smouldering revolt, and of mental disaster that was thereby created among the more passive and acquiescent women. The position was eased of course in two ways ; by the emergence in many women of a dominant personality which produced the pitiable spectacle of the hen-pecked husband ; and by women's continual use of the weapons of tears and innocently practised deception, the invariable refuge of the oppressed.

With the new insistence by women on their full rights of personality such weapons have been at once discarded as no longer necessary, and the result, obvious from any investigation into modern married life either as actually lived or as repre-

sented in literature, is the consciousness of a great and increasing strain between the sexes, conscious as never before that their constitution, desires and satisfactions are markedly different, and that to approximate to any stable condition of unity of will and purpose demands an immensely greater amount of give and take, of mutual forbearance and mutual understanding than had previously been recognized.

The reason for this lies deeply imbedded in the structural and functional differences of the sexes ; and has been concisely and well expressed by Tansley when he says, speaking of the unreality of much talk about sex-equality : " The male gamete is completely absorbed in the egg, its independent life is at an end with the act of mating. The woman's interest in sex does not end with the act of mating, but extends to the bearing and rearing of children ; and the physical intimacy with her children thus arising often engenders a stable and absorbing interest in them which extends throughout her whole life. Thus a woman comes to have in effect but one sexual life, while a man may have an unlimited number. A second factor which tends

to keep a woman constant is the primary passivity of her sex function. The man makes love, the woman is made love to."*

What is thus baldly and scientifically expressed is deeply and passionately realized in most marriages. The need of the husband for sexual expression is, normally, more continuous and greater than that of the wife ; if he remain a lover as well as a husband it will be an abiding element in his desire and will be blent of merely physical and strangely spiritual elements ; while in the case of the wife desire for sexual expression will be seasonable, variable and often, as for example, when she is nursing her baby, or greatly exercised in mind about her older children, entirely absent. The frequency with which this difference is experienced coupled with the infrequency with which it is understood, is in all probability the cause of more marital unhappiness, and of more disrupted unions than any other single contributory factor.

Men and women put it in other ways ; but this is in essence what they mean. When a wife complains that her husband, who used to

* *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, page 252.

have eyes for none save her, is now attracted by other women, she is probably forgetful of the fact that the deep satisfaction which she used to find in self-surrender to his desire has now passed into indifference or positive loathing. When a man seeks to insist, in the fashion of Soames Forsyte, on the last intimacies of the married relationship, regardless of his wife's tiredness, or lack of desire, or pre-occupation with the care of the children, as much his as hers, he forgets that motherhood makes an infinitely greater demand than fatherhood on strength and sacrificial energy, and that what was gladly and justly given at one time in a married career may be as rightly and properly withheld at another time.

When Kipling says, coarsely but truly :

> " For a man 'e must go with a woman
> Which a woman will not understand."

he need not necessarily be taken as excusing or advising polygamy ; he should be understood by a clever and sympathetic wife as reminding her that the impulse which drove her husband to her in the days of their courtship, strange amalgam

of flesh and spirit as that impulse usually remains, is not permanently satisfied for him, as it may be for her, by the coming of a child ; and in nine cases out of ten any ordinary man, not to speak for the moment of any Christian man, greatly prefers his own wife to any other woman ; but by constant denial of herself to him she may lay upon him a burden greater than he can bear. In the greater freedom, both of action and of speech, that has now come to them, women will have to be bluntly reminded that one main source of prostitution and unfaithfulness is the selfish and unsurrendered wife.

Equally must men be reminded that the unity of flesh in a true marriage means times, possibly very protracted times, of self-denial for them ; for where the sexual act is unaccompanied by mutual self-surrender it is indeed the gross and unclean thing which low minds continually suppose it to be ; yet when it is the climax of mutual understanding and mutual self-abnegation it is an act in which the spirit is as much concerned as the flesh ; it is a symbol of unity itself. " The wife hath not power of her own body but

the husband ; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body but the wife" (1 Corinthians, vii, 4). It is all contained in that, the great word of an emancipating mind which had seen all things in the light of Christ Jesus ; the unity and equality of man and woman among other things ; and if we follow that lead we shall see that this question of mutual forbearance, of the give and take necessary to all good life, but pre-eminently to married life, runs up into the acceptance of the Cross as Jesus' way of life for all His followers.

The Christian has learned to see every experience in a new light at the Cross of Christ ; and the great experience of marriage is no exception. This does not mean, as it is often taken to mean, that the Christian life is one in which self-abnegation is sought for its own sake and for the disciplinary ends which it serves. For the understanding Christian these are a worthy and valuable by-product ; but they are not the end of sacrifice. The Cross of Christ Himself is often misunderstood, and its appeal to vigorous natures, filled with the zest of living, unduly diminished by the representation of it as

merely passive suffering. It was suffering borne for a distinct and clearly apprehended purpose ; He laid down His life that He might take it again. The Cross was not a piece of self-inflicted torture, endured for the sake of moral purgation. It was an act of conscious acceptance of the will of God, voluntarily chosen and courageously done in order that the life that was in Him might flow out in full and perpetual force to others. "I am come that they might have life ; and that they might have it abundantly." So when the Christian takes up his Cross it is not as a piece of ascetic self-discipline ; it is, if he understands and is truly following Christ, as a clearly-willed way to fuller and more complete life. To crucify the flesh is not only to liberate the spirit ; it is also to sanctify the flesh and make it free for a fuller and finer life.

Wherever this is grasped in married life, wherever the Cross and Spirit of Christ are made the norm and law of that most subtle and intimate of all relationships, His promise is fulfilled. The Cross is not found to be foolishness ; nor the following of it to be the way of loss and

impoverishment ; but the plain and experienced result is fullness of life in which the body shares equally with the spirit. For where there has been renunciation for the sake of another, not in the spirit of gloomy self-discipline, but in glad obedience to the law of love, there is inevitably a quickening and enrichment of the entire relationship, and men and women realize that it was no paradox of Browning when he wrote :

> Let us not always say
> " Spite of this flesh to-day
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole,"
> As the bird wings and sings
> Let us cry " All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul."

The plain fact is that most marriages that go astray and fail of their high possibilities do so for the simple reason that the partners to them are not seeking to live as Christians in the married relationship. People who are more than nominal Christians, who are really seeking to make Christ the law of their life in other directions, may and often do, fail in this high task of marriage

because they have never as deliberately or consciously applied to it the Christian tests which they lay alongside other relations of life.

This would seem to indicate the most hopeful direction for the Church's intervention on this troubled and perplexed scene. There is room both on the part of Christian parents and Christian ministers for fuller, more explicit, and more detailed teaching with regard to the real nature of the married state. Just as it has been argued in connection with the primal facts of sex in itself, so may it be of their application within the married state, that here is an obvious duty on the part of parents to see that their lads and girls are not allowed to go blundering into it in a state of abysmal ignorance as to the real nature of the obligations, the forbearance, the sacrificial tendernesses which it must always involve. The plain fact is that, even within the Church, marriage has been regarded too much as a permitted pleasure ; too little as carrying the most solemn obligations and the most arduous duties. Its aim might indeed be well defined as happiness ; for in it the tenderest and deepest

of human happiness is to be found by those who use and value it aright ; but those who seek in it pleasure and pleasure alone are asking for the disillusionment which is inevitable to such an outlook upon any of the major experiences of human life.

There is profit for those who are candid enough to face facts, even when they are unpleasant and disagreeable facts, in even the most squalid revelation made in contemporary fiction of what marriage can become to those who have made it a hell for themselves and for one another by entering upon it as a means to selfish satisfaction. It is the duty of all Christian people to hold up another view ; that of marriage as the supreme call to that law of love which covers the entire life of the Christian, which means different things in different spheres of activity, and means in marriage such an understanding of another's needs, desires, aversions, and such a practical and continuous self-adjustment to them as taxes the powers of the greatest lover.

For the precise contribution which Christianity has made to the idea of love is its selflessness ;

> "It is to be all made of fantasy,
> All made of passion, and all made of wishes;
> All adoration, duty and observance,
> All humbleness, all patience and impatience;
> All purity, all trial, all observance."

The pagan Eros was fashioned of fantasy, passion and wishes; but it has taken Christ to fashion human love of humbleness, patience and observance.

Consequently in all their speech about marriage; in the jests, even, that they permit themselves with regard to it; in the ideals that they consciously or unconsciously set before their children, Christian parents will stress the elements of duty, sacrifice, and unselfishness. Mothers will regard it as the crowning profanation of their daughter's body and honour to look favourably upon a man merely because he is wealthy enough to give her a good time; fathers will teach their sons that there is something deeper in marriage than the satisfaction of our most primitive and most urgent instinct. Where the practice of clean honesty in speaking of sex matters has prevailed in a home it will also be easy for parents to tell girls and lads something of the different and

complementary characteristics of the opposite sex ; something of the opposition of interest and desire that married life must inevitably reveal ; much also of the strain incidental to motherhood ; something, perhaps, of the strain incidental to abstinence prolonged under the pressure of those endearments and intimacies both of body and spirit which make their complete expression natural and right.

The duty and opportunity of the minister are different, save in those probably rare cases in which he may have an opportunity of giving advice and counsel to men whom he already intimately knows. But in the pulpit he can at recurring intervals present to his people a worthy ideal of the married relationship as coming within the general orbit of the Christ's teaching and spirit. He can use it as illustrating the general claim of the Christian life to reach complete self-expression only through self-sacrifice. He can elucidate Stevenson's easily misapprehended text that " marriage is not a bed of roses, but a field of battle," of battle, that is, for those high things of character which here as everywhere else only come to those who are

willing to fight for them in the spirit of Christ. He can set an example to his people in the endeavour to understand, and make allowances for, the usual number of misfits which he will find among the married people under his charge. He can strive to help such husbands and wives—and no task calls for more tact—to a new effort towards mutual understanding and mutual forbearance. He can make it plain both in preaching and in private conversation that nowhere is the Christian doctrine of the possibility of endless new beginnings more possible or more fraught with hope than just here. At the difficult periods that assail most married lives he can drop an understanding word into the ears of men who probably know less of the physiological bases that underlie human life than he.

And where there has been disunion, or disharmony, limited to ceaseless and wearing friction in the home, or ending in open disruption, he can be foremost in that Christian charity which is set not to exacerbate evil and revel in scandal but to exercise the truly Christian art of healing and mending that which has been broken and torn. The value set upon chastity and marital

fidelity in Christian circles has been one of the most obviously new and real developments of the ethical teaching and spirit of Jesus ; but it cannot be gainsaid that with it there has gone far too little of His love for the outcast, His understanding of men and women who were sinners, His belief in the infinite possibilities of recuperation and renewal in the human soul. The Pharisaism of the good has often been the most exasperating and retarding influence in the return of the prodigal to the Father's house. The company of the far country is not unnaturally preferred to that of the elder brother ; and many a man has continued to herd swine rather than face the censorious atmosphere which chokes him when he is with those who are pledged by their bearing of the Christian name to perpetual tenderness to the bruised reed and the smoking flax. It is the hardest task set to the Christian fellowship to realize at one and the same time the infinite ideal set by Christ and the infinite patience with which He waited upon its growth ; the severity of His judgment, and the inexhaustible hopefulness and readiness to forgive with which He combined it.

The Church dare not, for its life, take the easy view of the world with regard to the failure of love in that sphere which is the most intimate, and therefore the most difficult field for its patient and continuous expression ; but the Church has often dared, at the cost of much true life, to take the Pharisaic, which is the hypocritical view ; to shun those guilty of irregularities, or failures, or mistakes in the field of married life as though they were sinners above all men and women ; to value mere physical abstinence and the ability to escape the last consequences of disrupted affection, beyond passion, and honesty, and those more positive qualities found in those among whom Jesus made His greatest conquests.

The spread of wider charity in the Christian fellowship itself, of a larger comprehension of the difficulties of men and women struggling against ignorance, incompatible tempers, and the galling of what their folly has made a yoke rather than a bond, the spread of a desire to understand and help, rather than to condemn and ostracise, these are the things and ways by which the Church of Christ might make its

true and effective contribution to the aid of our present distresses.

And as Stevenson has rightly said that "the real business of the preacher is to blow the trumpet for good," so the Church can and ought to proclaim, both from its pulpits and in the life of its people, that the view of marriage presented in realistic plays and novels is so far from being truly real that in thousands of homes known to all sorts and conditions of men and women up and down our land, known especially by the children who have been happy enough to have been reared in them, the picture has been presented of husbands and wives who have found in the deep happiness of their married life one of the greatest gifts of God, probably the greatest after the gift of Christ Himself. They have had their disagreements and difficulties ; each has had to learn, and sometimes by painful and sharp experience, how deep-going and pervasive and all-influencing was the act of God when "male and female created He them." They may have wondered at His method ; they may have often chafed at its incidental burdens ; but they have also been humbled by its mystery,

abased by the sacrificial tenderness and the magnificent spontaneity of self-surrender which it has made possible ; and grown at length to understand why, in its mystic and unfathomable depth of meaning, St. Paul found no unworthy symbol of the union of Christ and His Church.

Such married lovers will be very tender to the spring-time wooing, and will know how to acclaim it and rejoice in it as

> "Lyric love, half-angel and half-bird
> And all a wonder and a wild desire"

but they will also know that the years that have been rightly lived together bring an added depth and volume of meaning ; for the beauty of the blossom is, in nature and in life alike, but the prelude. "By their fruits ye shall know them" ; and by its fruit the marriage that is in any sense Christian can stand foursquare to all the winds of criticism. It will take more than Ibsen and H. G. Wells to destroy what Jesus Christ has blessed.

CHAPTER IV

DIVORCE

WHAT has been said in the foregoing chapter really amounts to the simple statement that there can be no Christian marriage save between Christian men and women. Simple as that statement is it cuts away a great deal of the ground from many of the attacks made on marriage to-day ; and from many of the arguments for free and easy divorce which as a rule accompany such attacks.

The real reason for many marriages ending disastrously is that man and wife have not even tried the Christian way.

This would suggest to anyone familiar with the conditions prevailing in regard to " getting married " in this country that the first and most obvious step for the Church to take in dealing with the question of divorce is to find out what proportion of those who desire marriage really intend to aim at a Christian ideal.

At present the position is absurd in the extreme. All kinds of people, utterly indifferent to the Christian faith, and in many cases grossly ignorant of its demands upon life and character, present themselves before ministers of the gospel, and are by them weakly and foolishly married, with the invocation of the sacred name, and the assumption of ideals which the contracting parties do not in the least share. It is little short of a mockery of God that men and women who have never owned His allegiance and show no intention of doing so, should either desire, or desiring should receive, the blessing of the Christian Church.

There is much to commend the Continental custom of a double ceremony of marriage ; a civil ceremony, carried out by an officer of the State, binding the parties to the fulfilment of those duties which the State has a right to demand for its own protection and in its purely civil interest ; following that, if desired, and if there is a reasonable prospect of its demands being met, a religious ceremony which would solemnly indicate that this union concerns not only the State but also Christ and His Church, in con-

formity with whose ideals the union will be directed.

If this were our practice the existing confusion of thought with regard to divorce would be greatly clarified and the way to a reasonable measure of reform speedily opened up. At present the difficulty of coming to any sort of agreement which will command the measure of common assent necessary to make any reform practicable is that argument is carried on by opposed parties, who having no common ground in their thinking about marriage, can hardly be expected to reach any common ground with regard to reasons for divorce.

There is something ludicrous, were it not pathetic, about the spectacle of a man like Lord Hugh Cecil resisting, in the House of Commons or elsewhere, the arguments of men and women who do not accept one of the pre-suppositions on which his objections to their proposals for changes in the law regarding divorce really rest. Men who regard marriage as a sacrament of the Church can never find common ground with those—and they are probably an increasing body in this country at all events—who think of marriage as

being at its best a mere social utility, and at its worst an intolerable bondage. Something in the nature of a "redding of the marches" would seem to be indicated before any broad general principles can be reached.

Even those Christians who do not regard marriage as a sacrament, who do not place it on the same plane as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, regard it at least in some such light as that in which it has been presented in the foregoing chapter, as a sacred ordinance of God for the human race, neither to be lightly entered into, nor to be lightly broken; and to all such, divorce, if it is to be permitted at all to Christians, can only be permitted on the very gravest grounds, and when it can be shown not only to the satisfaction of the aggrieved or suffering parties, but to the satisfaction of the Christian fellowship to which they belong, that all Christian interests, those of the society as well as of individuals, are better served by divorce than by the continuance of marriage.

That there are such cases Christians who do not regard marriage as a sacrament have always been prepared to allow; and this would suggest

that there are really three main classes of people in our country to be considered in handling the question of divorce and any possible change in the laws which regulate it.

(1) There are Roman Catholics, High Anglicans, and others of their way of thinking, who regard the words of our Lord in this connection (especially those in Matthew v, 31-32 ; Matthew xix, 3-9 ; Mark x, 2-12), as absolutely and permanently binding, and who would therefore seek not only to make them obligatory upon their own members, but would do their utmost to make the law of the land approximate as far as possible to this ideal.

With regard to this position it may be said that wherever any attempt has been made to put it into practice, as in the days when the Roman Church had a practical hegemony in religious matters over the greater part of the continent of Europe, it was found that all kinds of evasive methods had to be employed to lessen the force of a doctrine which was obviously too high for the level which human nature, and more especially male human nature, had as yet attained. Any candid story of the Reformation in the

sixteenth century is bound to include within its enumeration of the provoking causes of that strangely mingled movement a deep sense in the mind of the ordinary man of the injustice, preference to highly born and wealthy folk, and at least occasional venality of the Roman Church in granting dispensation for divorce to those who were unhappily, or for political reasons, unsuitably married.

Nothing is ever gained for religion by pushing single utterances of Jesus to the point at which they become either absurd in their working, or unacceptable to the judgment of men who may not be religious in the sense of the Churches but who certainly have a real concern for morals and for the actual working out of positive law in the social life of a people. To stake all on a few utterances of Jesus is to do, in this particular connection, what Tolstoy and the new legalists have done in the matter of non-resistance, and to put what seems to many people, who feel that they are not all unconscious of the moral and spiritual claim of Jesus, an intolerable strain on human nature and human institutions. It is to overlook the clear declaration of Jesus that He

did not come as a law-giver, but as the inspirer of a new spirit and way of regarding and taking human life. It is to ignore His pointed comment in another sphere of human activity : " Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you ? " it is, even more pertinently, to ignore the very comment He made in this identical connection, " All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given."

It is not merely the analytic study of the New Testament which indisposes men whose loyalty to Jesus is unquestioned to stake their all upon isolated words of His, when that study has made it difficult to know to what extent we are dealing with the *ipsissima verba* of the Master, and how far we may be faced with the more legalistic spirit of the early church. It is something bigger and more spiritual than that ; the persuasion that Jesus is indeed the Lord of all good life, that His teaching in any special direction has always to be interpreted by His whole life and bearing amongst men, and by the ever new interpretation which His Holy Spirit gives to His words and deeds, working through man's experience of life and reflection on the mean-

ing of Jesus as revealed in that experience; relating one word to another that seems to look in a very different direction; illuminating His speech to men by His actions for and with men; and thus, not by the compulsion of a single phrase, but by the pressure of an entire life, the whole of which is not yet spelled out, constantly calling men to a new estimate and a closer revision of their moral and spiritual concepts.

To those who think along these lines the laying down of a single positive ordinance with regard to marriage, and the construction of Jesus' sayings to mean that in no circumstances whatever is it subject to dissolution when it has been solemnly blessed by the Church, seems like a return to that very spirit of religious immobility which was the badge of the Pharisee, which was one of the things that cost Jesus His life, from which He has most notably redeemed the men who put their trust in Him.

(2) A second body of opinion might therefore be distinguished among those who take the view that marriage is normally intended to be life-long among Christian people, who would claim that divorce is not only unnecessary but un-

thinkable so long as anything like a real attempt at following the way of Jesus is being made within the marriage relationship, but who would not rule out divorce as wholly impermissible under certain circumstances.

Those who take this view would lay stress on the individual nature of Christian ethical problems and the impossibility of laying down laws that are to be binding in all cases and under all circumstances. They would stress the spiritual nature of the marriage bond and the spiritual interpretation undoubtedly given to it by Jesus, which would seem to suggest that positive law has little to do with the reality of the relationship, that the only real infraction of it occurs when its spiritual aspect is forgotten, and that for such spiritual disharmony as must occur when either or both parties to a marriage union are forgetful of the high claims made upon them by the very nature of their relationship, only spiritual remedies can avail. These are true repentance and frank forgiveness by one another and by God.

Those who conceive of their married life under a truly Christian aspect will find that it presents

them with the same two-fold aspect of mingled success and failure as every other Christian obligation ; they will never regard themselves as having attained, but even at their best will realize that there is much for which forgiveness must be mutually sought and extended. They will be conscious that offences far short of gross physical unfaithfulness constitute a real disruption of the marriage bond and will be aware that there have been periods when they have been actually, if not legally, divorced from one another.

Christians who so bring this relationship into effective moral continuity with every other relationship of the Christian life will realize that the difference between them and those who are apt to be regarded as sinners *in excelsis* is one of degree and not of kind. They will remember the drastic words in which Jesus made thoughts hidden from all men as culpable as overt acts, and will be correspondingly slow to think that all is right with them so long as they have avoided the last extreme of infidelity to that great vow which did incorporate and make them one.

And being thus conscious of the infinite demands of the married relationship, they will be sympathetic to those who have failed, in a more obvious fashion than themselves, to meet its high and exacting demands ; but they will also feel that it calls for the extreme, patient and long continued application of Christian methods of recovery and renewal before the rude surgery of the divorce court is called in and the attempt at an incorporated life pronounced hopeless.

It is obvious that where it is real and living, the Christian fellowship has a part to play even in these so delicate and involved matters. It is impossible for those who feel in any real sense that they are fellow members in the one body of Christ to stand and watch an increasing alienation taking place between husband and wife without feeling also that it is a matter in which the whole fellowship is involved. The difficulties of helpful intervention are notorious ; but for members of a Christian church to seek the aid of the divorce court to cut the tangled skein of their troubled relations before the aid of their fellow members has been invoked, and for

the church to back tamely out of their difficulties as having got entirely beyond its guardianship or control is to sanction a double defection. Yet this is what commonly takes place at present ; and it is only one example of the Church's slack attitude to its discipline of which more will be said in a subsequent chapter.

It is obvious that when things have come to such a pass through incompatibility of temper, or intemperance, or infidelity, that resource is had to the divorce court, the Christian life of one or both parties to a union must have become such that it should have aroused *long before* the affectionate solicitude of the Church to which they belong. It is surely the duty of the Church to maintain that there is no sin which is unforgivable, no sinner who cannot be redeemed , and while it is the duty of the entire community to give practical effect to these Christian truths by seeking to regain sinful members rather than to ostracise them, it is obvious that the heaviest and most constant part of that duty falls upon the wife or husband whose life was deliberately linked by the greatest of promises and the closest of ties with that of the offender.

The Christian can have no patience with the theory, so commonly advocated to-day, that because there has been weakness, or forgetfulness, or even grossly exaggerated offence on the side of one partner to a union, absolution is thereby given to the other partner from the Christian duties of forgiveness, attempted reconciliation, and such endeavour as may be made at the picking up of the broken pieces and the making of a new start. Just because the marriage tie is so intimate and its demands so exacting, there is no discharge for the Christian from the high and noble warfare of the spirit involved in every case, and far more in the worst case, of making the best of it. Forgiveness, reconciliation, the effort to make the best not only of their broken life, but of any other life that may have been broken as a result of their failure ; that is undoubtedly the Christian approach to all cases of married disaster.

Does this, then, preclude any possibility of divorce for the Christian ? It is here that the holders of this second body of opinion would part company with their fellow Christians.

It is obvious that love can be defeated on the highest fields of human endeavour by obstinate

impenitence and a resolute continuance in evil. If all has been done that can be done ; if, after forgiveness ungrudgingly and uncensoriously offered ; if, after a resolute attempt to win back to the compulsions of love one who has grossly offended against it, there is no response whatever ; then there is no interest of either morality or Christianity served by saying that marriage is indissoluble and that two people must be tied together for life when one has ceased to desire it and the other has ceased to hope that the union can ever again have real spiritual significance.

It would seem to me to be truer to our Lord's words and thinking to say that such a marriage has already been dissolved by the action of one or both of the parties to it than to say that it is an outrage on the Christian ideal of marriage for the law to step in at last and declare that what has long been fact is now recognized in law. Where every effort of a Christian husband or wife, where all the persuasions of love exercised by a Christian community, have failed to produce either true penitence or the desire to make a new beginning, "the hardness of men's hearts" still provides a reason making for the allowability

of divorce even between those who have been members of a Christian church.

The alternative can be made to work out so unchristianly and so subversively of all common-sense ways of thinking, that those who seek in the mind of Jesus a guide to the path of life cannot feel that He is being truly interpreted to our day when His words are made to sanction the retention of men and women in bonds from which one or other of them has, as a matter of fact, escaped with violence.

For the sake of the Christian community itself, which ought not to be able to tolerate the spectacle of one of its members indissolubly linked to a moral corpse ; for the sake of the soul-life and sanity of one partner to a union which is defied and derided by the other member of it ; most of all for the sake of the children, whose outlook on the whole of life can only be tainted and poisoned by their being brought up in a home where the constraints and glories of love have become a mere matter of bitter mockery, it is not unchristian to suggest that the Church should be able to pronounce that, by their own acts, men and women have already exiled them-

selves from the blessings and high possibilities of true marriage.

But it should be, in the case of unions that have been sanctioned by the Church, equally the duty of the Church to pronounce upon the time at which amendment seems to be hopeless, and to give liberty to its members to seek the right to have that recognized by civil law through the forms of the divorce court. The Church, by the claims that it makes upon the life of its members, by the moral pressure that it ought to give them in seeking every moral and spiritual means for securing repentance and amendment of life, would thus interpose the most effective of all barriers against hasty or thoughtless divorce. In innumerable cases it already does so. It is not in those marriages where even one of the partners is in active and loyal membership of the Church that clamour for freer and easier methods of divorce is found.

But where the Church, acting through its recognized authorities, whatever these may be, has solemnly decided that all the moral and spiritual interests of all parties would be better served by a dissolution of the marriage tie, there

is little reason to suppose that the interests of either morality or Christianity would very often suffer. Mistakes would be made ; wrongs doubtless sometimes be done ; that is inevitable and would at once be admitted by all Christians save those who cling to the fiction of infallibility as being anywhere resident in the Body of Christ. But for those who take the saner and more demonstrable view that there is such a thing as the guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit, and that, while men may err in their use or application of it, that guidance can in the main be utterly depended upon by those who seek it in humility and truth, the solemn consent of the Christian community to an application for the divorce of one of its members would not in practice be very often either wrongly given or withheld. For it would be given only after all Christian patience and endeavour at winning an erring fellow-member had been loyally attempted ; and it would be withheld only when rashness, or impatience, or the exhibition of an unchristian temper was obvious in the applicant.

Divorce is very uncommon among practising

Christians at present ; it may safely be asserted that with a closer scrutiny of the claims of those who seek the blessing of the Church upon their marriage ; with a more faithful use of the Christian methods of reconciliation, penitence and forgiveness between those who err ; and with the proper aid of the Christian community exercising its true function as mediator, assessor, and when necessary judge of its members, it would be practically unknown.

It is not from within the Church that the demands for an enlargement of facilities for divorce have sprung ; the subject is one which never crosses the threshold of the minds of most Church members, so far as its bearing upon themselves is concerned ; but the Church ought to have a clearly defined view as to the actual position, duty and rights of its members to whom the rare, but lamentable, experience of considering their own position with regard to it should occur.

It seems to me that the view outlined above of divorce as the last possibility of moral action and appeal after all the other methods of love have failed, not impulsively embraced by the individual

as an easy way out, but solemnly sanctioned by the Christian community as the one remaining resource, is a view consonant with the entire teaching of Jesus.

(3) But the modern interest in this question is not due to the personal interest of those in any branch of the Christian Church. It is due to the demands for increased facility of divorce made by those who increasingly disown all the branches of the Church and deny, not obscurely, the moral validity of the teaching of Jesus. This fact is obscured in this country by the number of such persons who, for traditional or social reasons, have sought to have their marriage performed in a church, or by a Christian minister. This does not prevent them, when dissatisfaction with the results of their union arises, owing to the fault of one or both partners to it, from unmeasured railing at the churches for seeking to interpose any restriction on their demand for immediate divorce. The hypocrisy of their situation is doubtless unintentional ; but, as indicated above, it makes a demand upon the Church for drastic action in making plain to all who seek its services the obligation which they entail. It is disingen-

uous for people who have no desire to achieve Christian marriage to ask for the service of the Church ; it is pusillanimous for the Church to grant their request without making some reasonable endeavour to see that its ideals are recognized and that there is some real intention of trying to put them into effective action.

But, when this is said, some recognition must be made of the honest difficulties of many people in this country who sought no blessing from the Church in their union ; who regarded it from the outset as a mere civil contract ; and who are therefore wholly within their rights in claiming that it should be so regarded by others when, for one reason or another, the desire is present with one or both to terminate it.

To seek to tie such persons to an interpretation of their duties and responsibilities which they have strenuously or by implication disavowed is neither honest nor Christian ; and the attempt to meet proposals for Reform of the Divorce Law by mere obstructive tactics, or by the proclamation of a standard which has been *ex hypothese* disavowed, is not only bound to fail, but deserves to fail. We have no right as Christians to require

from all our fellow-citizens as a matter of positive law what we regard as the Christian demand in any particular sphere of life. We have only the right as citizens to see that our Christian principles are not abrogated or infringed by law, and to endeavour to have the framing or re-fashioning of any particular laws carried out in as close an approximation to the Christian ideal as the conscience of our fellow-citizens makes practicable.

To take a concrete instance ; it is both absurd and unchristian to say that because John Smith and Mary Jones took one another for husband and wife twenty years ago they are still husband and wife and must always remain so, though every one knows that John Smith has been in America for ten years and Mary Jones is, and has been for five years, cohabiting with William Robertson. Nothing is gained either for the Church, or for Christ, or for the cause of morality in the State, by interposing legal difficulties in the way of declaring that the facts are as stated, and not as a zealous Churchman would like to have them stated. And nothing is gained, further, for any good cause, by making the expense of divorce

proceedings so prohibitive that where a marriage union has gone to irretrievable ruin divorce becomes the luxury of the rich and open infraction of the law the resource of the poor. From the point of view of the effective action of Christian sentiment upon the State everything points to the Church supporting those reforms in the divorce law which would move in the direction of providing a truer equality between men and women, and between rich and poor. Its real concern is not to bolster up a system which at present produces lying, hypocrisy and the spread of immorality ; but to aid any such judicious efforts at reform as shall make it possible, though not easy, for those whose marriage has become intolerable to them and injurious to the welfare of society, to have it inexpensively and quietly annulled.

That the present system does lead to disastrous moral results is patent to any observer of our contemporary life. To take one example ; on June 30th, 1919, *The Times* published a letter from a Labour Member of Parliament who boasted that he had been divorced from his wife for desertion and adultery by camouflaged evidence

under both headings. Upon which remarkable performance the biting commentary was justly made that "the only unusual thing about this unedifying episode was the public avowal."

It is notorious that the pleas for the restitution of conjugal rights, with their accompanying letters of pumped up pathos, which figure so commonly in the day's news, are the first steps towards divorce proceedings which are made finally possible and successful by lies and deception of the kind just quoted. It was equally notorious that the necessity for a woman to prove cruelty, before the recent alteration in the law, was the repeated occasion for the staging of carefully prepared scenes to which a witness had been thoughtfully supplied beforehand.

It is quite certain that the humanity of Scots law, when compared with the English code, in making adultery in either husband or wife a sufficient ground for divorce, as till recently was the case in England, without the addition of cruelty in the case of the husband, and in granting divorce after four years "malicious" separation, has not led to any floods of immorality being let loose upon the Northern part of the

kingdom, but has prevented much hard lying, much deception, much concubinage and co-habitation, and made possible many a case of decent re-marriage, with the consequent re-building of a home and the safeguarding of the lives of many innocent children.

This fact in itself is sufficient to put Christian people on their guard against those who in the name of Christ and the Church oppose all suggestions of Reform in the Divorce Law as being in the interest of Christian morality, and in defence of the home. The truth of the case is precisely opposite. It is essential in the interests of public morality and in order to give some children a chance that the present position, especially in England, should be terminated as speedily and as wisely as possible.

The attitude the Church ought to adopt seems to me to have been generously and wisely stated by the Bishop of Durham when he wrote : " The conditions of divorce are properly to be determined by the State in the light of Christian principle, with reference to the actual necessities and circumstances of men. Its effort should therefore be :

(1) To keep the Christian ideal of an indissoluble marriage ever before us.

(2) To base our laws upon the nearest practical approach to that ideal."

If this statement were accepted in general, everything would then turn upon the interpretation given to the words " the nearest practical approach to the ideal."

The suggestions of the Majority Report as to suitable grounds for divorce were : adultery ; wilful desertion for three years and upwards ; cruelty ; incurable insanity after confinement for not less than five years ; habitual drunkenness incurable after three years under a separation order ; and imprisonment under a commuted death sentence.

Infinite discussion is possible as to all these conditions save the first two (which would bring the English law into conformity with the existing Scottish code). They deal with what are generally known as " hard cases " ; and in connection with them we are constantly reminded of the fact that " hard cases make bad law." That may be true ; yet it is no consolation to those who labour under the hardness of their

particular case. It is obvious that those seeking to conform to the Christian ideal of marriage and divorce outlined above would not seek to have recourse to law in such cases. They would regard the growth of a bad habit, or the affliction of insanity, or the possibility of the emergence of their partner from a life in prison as just a new call, however heavy and straining a call, to a new exhibition of patience, tenderness, and the invincible hope of Jesus.

But the Christian has no right to make such a moral demand on the man or woman who disavows the Christian ethic and regards the partnership as dissolved by the aberration, or withdrawal of the full personality, or the physical presence of the other partner. It is surely to such cases that the denunciation of Jesus of those who lay burdens upon others too heavy to be borne most fitly applies ; and while there would always be found some, who from the gallantry and fineness that is found everywhere in human nature, apart from the conscious pursuit of a Christian ideal, would persevere in regarding their union as still existing, no end of morality is served by keeping in a legal tie those who feel that in actual practice

it has been severed. However that may be, the interest of the Church in new legislation about divorce would be served if the general aim of public morality, and the welfare of the children who are the State's coming citizens, were resolutely kept in view.

It is on such general considerations, not on an impossible endeavour to apply a full Christian ideal to those who are not prepared to accept it, that the thinking and action of the Church must be based. There is enough respect in this country for the decencies of life and the natural sanctity of the marriage tie to make quite impossible any yielding to wild demands for divorce as free and easy as it has become in some parts of the United States of America. There is enough commonsense in our people as a whole to make them feel the beauty and usefulness of family life, which ultimately depends upon the common honour paid to the marriage bond, to make them safe against any of those sheerly revolutionary doctrines of marriage and divorce which are implicit in much of the fiction of our time.

Now that women have been made an efficient factor in political life and count as voters, we may

be quite sure that no rash assent will be given to proposals that would cut at the root of whatever is sound in our traditonal morality; for though Mrs. John Smith may not be a convinced and practising Christian she is sufficiently acute to see that, if marriage is a bond, it is yet a bond that provides within it liberty for the upbringing of the little Smiths, and that in a State that was organized by H. G. Wells the tie between her and Smith and the children would be a very tenuous one. And while she may have good reason for thinking very little of Smith at times, she is not likely to be very ardent about the State as an "over-parent."

It is really here, in the production and nurture and equipment of the children for life, that the Church has its supreme interest.

So while it may be admitted that in certain cases human good will be better served by the rough surgery of divorce; while there may be reasonable objection to the rough conclusion of Mr. Dooley—a strange ally for the High Churchmen—that "marriage is the state in which, when it is impossible for people to go on living together, they go on living together;" while

exceptions may be admitted and provision for hard cases allowed, sensible Christians will contend that human nature being what it is, and the pull of life and parenthood being what they are, divorce will always remain as it is now, the unhappy and exceptional thing, and marriage, with whatever degree of difficulty and friction attending it, the main pillar of ordered society and the natural bulwark of the lives of little children.

For it ought to be clearly stated that life is not for the mass of married people in this country anything like what we find in our novels, or in the statistics of the divorce court. It may include a fair number of cases of disillusionment with what was unreasonably expected from marriage ; an even greater number of cases of those who are conscious that they have not got the best out of their married life, through their own fault ; but in the overwhelming majority of cases there is a clear perception that when all allowances have been made marriage has been one of the greatest and most character-forming experiences of life, and that for the sake of their children alone they will not deliberately take the steps that will lead to its disruption.

It is in this perspective that the whole question should be viewed, even by and for those who do not consciously accept the full Christian implications of marriage ; and wiser words could not be addressed to those who clamour for indiscriminate freedom of divorce than those of Crichton Miller : "There are people who cut their way through many intricate problems by using the appeal to liberty indiscriminately. The case for divorce is quite simple to them, because marriage so often presents 'the tragic spectacle of two people yoked together who cannot develop their own individuality.' It does not occur to them that this tragic spectacle may have to be endured and perpetuated because the individual is of less account than society ; and because two people who have perpetrated the blunder of getting married to each other must endure the dreary results for the sake of what the marriage tie means to society, and for the sake of what parenthood means to the next generation."*

Careful readers of the New Testament must often have been struck by the fact, to which allusion has already been made, that in Mark's

* *The New Psychology and the Teacher*, page 79.

Gospel (x, 1-13) the pronouncement of Jesus on divorce and marriage is immediately followed by the story of His blessing the little children. We cannot do better than keep these great human issues in the perspective and relation in which He has put them.

CHAPTER V

BIRTH CONTROL

It is no longer possible for the Church to burke the discussion of Birth Control. It has for some considerable time been giving, through many of its members, a silent, but practical opinion about it. He must indeed be a simple believer who attributes to the marvellous working of Providence the strange prevalence of the single child, or of families of two at the most, which tend to be the standard in the financially hard-pressed, but socially aspiring strata of our congregations. Where there is a certain amount of culture, a strong desire on the part of the parents to have a full share in the social amenities usual for their class, and an even stronger desire to give their children all the benefits of a good education and a start in life sound both on its physical and intellectual sides, the small family tends to be as common nowadays in this country as it has for long been

in France. It is unreasonable to suppose that this is the result of divine intervention. There only remains the hypothesis that methods of birth-control are known and are being practised.

While the subject still remains taboo in ordinary church circles, and it would be regarded as improper or unsuitable in many congregations even to refer to it, there are men here and there who have had the courage to break through this policy of hurtful silence ; and the open discussion of the question in 1924, at the Birmingham Conference, best known by its quaint amalgam of initials as C O P E C, has definitely brought the question out into the light of ecclesiastical day. This is all to the good ; for if birth-control is wrong, then the sooner that judgment is conveyed to the membership of our churches in unmistakable terms, the better for all parties concerned ; if it is allowable for Christian people, then the sooner the air of suspicion, mystery and silence at present surrounding it, is removed, again the better ; for nothing can be more harmful for the life of Christian people than that they should indulge a practice about which they are in a state

of moral uncertainty, or concerning which they feel uneasy as to the real view taken of it by the Christian fellowship to which they belong.

At this stage discussion seems to be the suitable process, so far as most branches of the Church are concerned.

The Roman Church, as is well known, has not only made up its mind, but has had no hesitation about declaring that mind. Birth control has been denounced from its altars. All honour to the Roman Church for the clearness of that conviction, which will be duly weighed by all those who seek to further the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, who believe that a common Christian mind should be attainable on all questions that affect the life of the Church. Only the cynical will see in that conviction an anxious desire for the production of as many potential Roman Catholics as possible, without any regard to their physical or educational welfare. When any other branch of the Church of Christ can rival the record of the Roman Church in its concern for children it may luxuriate in the use of that particular stone of controversy ; but by that time it will not desire to use it.

A graver criticism is that which bases itself on the fact that a sound judgment on such a matter must be hard to come at on the part of a Church whose ministry is entirely celibate, which neither feels the limitation so involved, nor seeks to modify it by calling its laymen or its women into its councils.

The Roman Church, with its own peculiar understanding of what the guidance of the Holy Spirit means in practice, cannot be expected to regard this as any barrier to arriving at a sound judgment, even on a matter in which the evidence of married people is obviously so relevant ; but that need not hinder those of us who do not share the Roman view from stating quite emphatically our own considered view, that this is not a matter to be settled by clerics, either celibate or the reverse, but by the entire body of instructed Christian opinion, acting under the illumination of the Spirit which God denies to none of His children, pondering on the teaching of Jesus in its fullness and entirety, as it seems to bear upon this particular question, and using the light of experience as God's usual and appointed way for guiding His people into the truth that they humbly seek.

It is in such ways that truth has ever come to the people of Christ ; and before the emergence of any doctrine which can be safely and usefully promulgated as in any sense binding on Christian men and women there must inevitably be a period of discussion and of experiment ; God's usual method of trial and error and rectification of error being the way by which He will lead His people now as in the past. All that is proposed, then, is such a discussion in the light of the best knowledge attainable by the writer.

At the outset it should be perfectly plain that we are faced here with a great moral issue of a wholly new kind.

The ancient world, unlighted by the thought of the sacredness of even the feeble spark of personality which inhabits the new-born child, had no moral difficulties to encounter in the case of unwanted children. Nothing so strongly illustrates the new sense of pity, compassion and reverence for all life in the early years of Christianity as the prompt cessation, wherever it became a real influence, of the well-nigh universal habit of the exposure of undesired infants. Exposure and abortion have alike become unthinkable wherever

the love of Jesus for children has penetrated the souls of men and women. The result through the Christian centuries has been a steady growth in Christian populations, checked only by the the ravages of plague and war, both regarded by the uninformed Christian thinking of the centuries as " acts of God," unescapable by the forethought and determination of man.

The improved hygiene of the nineteenth century, the most Christian concern for children from their tenderest years, evidenced in the institution throughout our land of Welfare Centres, the resulting fall in infant mortality combined with such factors as the repeal of the Corn Laws, the expansion of trade, and the resulting cheapness of food, made the middle decades of the nineteenth century a time of unparalleled fecundity.

Then, as has been pointed out by Sir William Beveridge, K.C.B., a sudden fall in fertility began to be observable among all European races. " For Europe, as a whole, excluding Russia, the fall in thirty years from 1881 to 1911 is in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent. Why did the practice of birth-control begin or increase so suddenly and so generally about the year 1880 ?

No change of economic or other conditions (such as compulsory education or public health legislation) peculiar to a few countries only, would account for so general a change. On the other hand, no general change of economic conditions which could in any way increase the need for restriction of families can be traced as having occurred at the time. The year 1880 falls in the middle of a period of industrial expansion during which prosperity and the standard of living rose continuously in most, if not all, the countries concerned. They certainly did so in Britain. It must be inferred that the sudden development of birth-control at that particular date was due, not to any increase in the need for control, but to improvements in the means of control, to invention and exploitation of new powers over nature, like those given by chloroform or gunpowder, but unlike them in being driven underground by public opinion and the law." That the process so begun has been rapidly accelerated is proved by the further statistics quoted in the same address (to the British Association at Toronto, 1924). "The number of children born in England and Wales in 1923 was 750,000

compared with 950,000 in 1903, a fall of 200,000."

To those who may be disposed to deprecate even the discussion of such a subject as birth-control these statements and figures alone ought to suggest overwhelmingly that we are in the presence of a phenomenon so vast in its possibilities that it may result in a total transformation of the social structure as we have known it. Bishop Gore has stated that at a meeting at which many of the best known economists were present, "no one disputed the statement that the economic and social effects of Birth Control in the long run would be as important as the social and economic effects of the invention of the steam engine ; and no one deprecated the statement."

It is unthinkable that the Church should have nothing to say about a matter with such vast possibilities ; and a discussion of the most important statements that have been made for and against it ought to be of some help in clearing the mind and preparing the way for a considered moral judgment.

The first argument by which it is supported is from the side of Eugenics, or the attempt to

improve the human strain by careful and selected breeding as is done in the case of the animals which man has domesticated for his own uses. It is pointed out by those who approach the matter from this side that while in the breeding of cattle, whether for beef or for milk, wonders have been wrought in a very short space of time by eliminating the weaker and less fit strains, there is no such selective endeavour in the breeding of men and women. Such selection as there seems to be is rather in favour of multiplying what the supporters of this view call the "worst" strains at the expense of the "better." Sir William Beveridge says: "The unskilled workmen are more fertile than the skilled, the skilled workmen than the professional men, teachers, doctors, civil servants, lawyers, and the like: this excess of fertility is only partially neutralized by high death-rates; the man of lower economic class who by exceptional ability rises into a higher class at the same time takes his inheritance of ability with him into a region where it has a smaller chance of perpetuation. Moreover this dysgenic tendency is new, or at least has increased materially in the last fifty years; the gap between the classes

in respect of fertility has been widened since the introduction of birth-control ; in this respect we are doing worse than former generations."

It is this aspect of the question which has been fastened on by Dean Inge, who in his "Outspoken Essays," has familiarized many thoughtful people, not specially conversant with the subject on its merely scientific side, with what he regards as the imminent peril in which our civilization stands through this more prolific breeding from "inferior" stocks.

When a Christian man looks at an argument like that I imagine that his first feeling is that it smacks of a kind of intellectual snobbishness in its determination as to which are "worse," and which "better" strains in the human family; and he is also apt to be repelled by the application to human life of categories suggestive of the newspaper reports of cattle-shows. If he knows and remembers his Plato he will instinctively tend to characterize an ideal commonwealth shadowed forth as recruited on these lines where "the best of both sexes ought to be brought together as often as possible, and the worst as seldom as possible," in the blunt phrase of Glaucon, as "a city of pigs."

He will remember the large and healthy families he has himself known, reared under all the disadvantages of poverty, under-nourishment, and overcrowding whether in a town-slum or in an agricultural labourer's cottage ; he will compare their whole lot not unfavourably, even on its moral and spiritual side, with that of the single child of the well-to-do home ; he will recall exceptional cases of men distinguished in all walks of life who served a not ignoble apprenticeship to the greater ends of being in just such a home ; and he is not likely to forget that Jesus of Nazareth lived His early years as the oldest member of a family of at least six other children, and that their housing accommodation would probably place them among the " worst " stocks of the modern Eugenist.

He will find much also that is suggestive in the evidence laid before the National Council of Public Morals by Lady Barrett (a qualified doctor) when she argued that what is wanted by mothers of the working-class is not a smaller family, but better conditions of life in which to rear the family she has.

" I believe," she said, " that social reform is

intimately connected with the subject, and reform of the conditions in which women of the poorer classes live is far more important for equalizing the fertility of different classes than the spread of contraceptive knowledge, and my opinion is that the working-class women will accept that. I was asked once to go to Bristol to speak to a meeting of working-class women on birth-control. When I got there I found it was a meeting of the I.L.P., led by a very ardent contraceptive adherent. They told me the whole of the women were in favour of using contraceptives, and I did not try to persuade the women one way or the other. I told them the facts, and asked them if they would rather have certain of their work arranged in ways I suggested for them, leaving them more freedom for their children and household, or whether they would rather reduce the number of their children. I found what I have always found among working women, that they would infinitely rather have working conditions made possible, and in regard to their families, they did not mind a few extra children. What is wearing out these women is the impossible conditions under which they work, and the country

has not yet attempted to apply the laws of industrial hygiene to the women in the home, because it means drastic reform if it is done, although it is perfectly possible."

The Christian has a special brief for considering the opinions of babes as often containing more of the stuff of revelation than those of the wise and prudent, and these working-women deserve from him at least as much deference as Dean Inge on a subject on which they are so vitally concerned.*

Yet when all this has been said and duly weighed, the Christian cannot afford to be blind

* After writing the above I came across the following striking statement in Mr. J. A. Spender's fascinating book, "The Public Life.": "There is no reason to suppose that the purpose of nature would be served by the multiplication of the type which the 'eugenist' seems to have in mind—that of a cultivated upper-middle class with serious intellectual pursuits—or even that the general happiness would be promoted by it. Granted that they are the salt of the earth, it is not good to have too much salt. There is no sign that this class is failing; it is always being recruited from the classes below it, and where it is not being recruited, the failure is not to be attributed to nature but to a social order which raises barriers between classes. In a new country where conditions are equal, the "proletariat" seems to supply the necessary proportion of energetic, resourceful and even intellectual characters, and even in the old countries it responds quickly to efforts to improve its physical surroundings . . . Infinitely more may, no doubt, be achieved, but the idea that some self-stultifying process of nature is constantly at work thwarting the efforts of statesmen seems to be a gratuitous counsel of despair. Nature may not produce the type laid down for her by her instructors, but it is at least possible that she knows better."

to the result on social life and on the stuff of which souls are made of the reckless and uncontrolled habits of many men and women in the financially poorer strains of our country (whether they are "worse" or "better" strains he will not consider it is his duty to pronounce). That they present our civilization with grim enigmas which it will take all our Christianity and statesmanship to solve he will be well aware ; he will also, as a Christian, be averse from thinking that, if birth-control is a good thing, the knowledge of its methods and beneficial results should be confined to those ranks of society capable of paying a doctor for giving them that knowledge ; but in the present stage of the discussion he will be equally averse from claiming that it is the duty of the State to attempt to check this "dysgenic" tendency by making information as to birth-control methods a routine part of the work at Health and Maternity centres. The method of tackling the problems which so disturb Dean Inge and the Eugenists may prove to be spiritual, rather than mechanical.

A second argument which will have greater weight with the Christian mind is that based on

the results in the physical and mental life of women due to excessive child-bearing. Anyone who has read a fairly representative series of nineteenth century biographies, dealing as they do in most cases with men and women coming from middle-class or aristocratic homes (using these words in their conventional sense) will not fail to remember the picture made time after time upon a mind sensitive to such impressions of an exhausted mother condemned to spend the even-of her days upon a sofa, or quietly surrendering the unequal struggle somewhere about the middle span of her life, and remaining but an affectionate memory to her children at the very time when her influence would have counted most deeply in their lives. All of us know instances in the humbler walks of life of women whose struggle with poverty and an ever-increasing family has made them take rank as among the supreme heroines of life. They may lack their sacred bard ; but in the recollection of ministers and social workers they stand out as among the most amazing examples of what the human spirit can stand without breaking. Yet among them too the exorbitant price of such a life has resulted,

though not so often as one would have expected, in premature break-down or death. And the resultant strain upon nerve and temper, with its associated and inevitable consequences of bickering, strife, and the production of a mental and moral atmosphere wholly unfavourable to the spiritual interests of the rapidly growing family, passes any form of human assessment.

It is in its proposal to alleviate this situation that Birth Control seems to bring with it a glowing promise to the over-burdened. And here it ought in fairness to be stated that Birth Control is not what its more impassioned opponents are often inclined to represent it as being, Birth Prevention. The ideal of its best advocates is never the childless marriage; but the selection of such times for birth as seem most suitable to the health of the mother; and the attainment of as many births as seem desirable from the point of view of the whole circumstances of the family.

The ideal is that of the substitution of deliberate, planned, and welcome births for haphazard, reckless and often most unwanted births. So stated the ideal seems to have in it much that should appeal to a Christian mind. It can be no

part of the intention of God that a mother should be so worn out by incessant child-bearing that motherhood, instead of being the crown of her being and a cause of the most intense joy, becomes a dreaded nightmare, and the arrival of each child an occasion for bitter despondency and gloom.

It looks to be a thoroughly Christian proposition that husband and wife should agree as to the most solemn act they ever jointly undertake, the act by which a new life is started upon the career which contains within it the potency of becoming eternally a child of God.

Here again it must be stoutly contended that if that ideal is accepted as Christian, and the methods of Birth Control regarded as an allowable means of realizing it, every Christian must share the view that class-discrimination in the matter is absolutely unthinkable and that the contention of the Workers' Birth Control Group, that working women who desire such information should have public and reliable means of getting it, is well-grounded. It will not do for the Christian to shut his eyes to the fact that well-to-do members of a Christian congregation can obtain such information from

their own doctors, while the Minister of Health in a Labour Government (probably because he happened to be a Roman Catholic) refused point blank to allow such information to be given to married women at a Health Centre, even where they had already a number of children suffering from venereal disease. It is probably not recognized in comfortable circles that there is in this question the possibility of the emergence of just such an exasperated sense of social injustice as looks quite unreal until the facts are understood.

If the ideal of selected births is a Christian one, then the possibility of its realization ought to be put within the reach of all; if it is not, then it is not sufficient to deny knowledge of its methods to those unable to pay a private physician; it ought to be denounced as wrong in every class of society. This is one among many examples of the hitherto unsuspected ramifications of this subject in its bearing upon the structure of society and civilization as a whole; it is one that suggests the grave necessity for coming to a conclusion with regard to it which will stand the test of all the unknown results which may flow from its

general use. Some criticism, therefore, of the ideal suggested and of the methods of Birth Control as the way of attaining it are now in place.

At the outset it may be suggested that while God can no longer be called in by any thoughtful Christian mind as a responsible partner in the unbridled use of man's reproductive faculty, so that there are few Christians who would now say about every child born into the world that he is a child of God's sending, yet it has to be remembered that parents are not necessarily always the best judges of how many children it is well for them to have. Many an "unwanted" child has been the solace of the parent's declining years, and the most helpful member in the entire family. Not for nothing has the fable of "The Ugly Duckling" found a place in some form in the literature of every race. During the Great War the number of only sons whose death in action left their parents stripped of the main interest of their declining years suggested that the results of Birth Control do not always reflect the collective wisdom of mankind, but may reflect rather the short-sighted selfishness of comfort-loving fathers

and pleasure-seeking mothers. And indeed it is not necessary to single out the tragedies of war to come to the conclusion that Birth Control in its most popular expression, if not in the more scientific sense of its promoters, may lead very easily to the production of pampered, lonely and anti-social children who would have been infinitely the better of those sharp tussles with brothers and sisters which are no mean part of the educational value of a large or largish family.

There is also the very pertinent criticism that in the class of cases which the Eugenists specially have in mind, the thriftless, hard-drinking, and potentially criminal are the least likely to use the checks upon conception supplied by the knowledge of Birth Control methods, even were that knowledge put into their possession.

It is precisely among the thoughtful and restrained already, among those who have some ideal of conjugal respect and some thought of responsibility for the training and education of those whom they bring into the world that the revulsion of feeling from the thought of a woman's married life as being one continuous series of pregnancies and births has already become most

clearly marked ; while it is difficult to believe that, without the introduction of some such moralizing conceptions of what married life means, those who are at present utterly heedless of one another and of the children they thoughtlessly produce would exhibit even the measure of restraint which is presupposed in the use of any contraceptive method.

The logical outcome of the demand for a cessation of the breeding of the unfit is compulsory sterilization ; and it does not seem to me worth while devoting any time to the discussion of a suggestion which, if it is not plainly anti-Christian, raises at least two insuperable barriers. The first is that there is no single person and no representative body of opinion which could be safely entrusted with the decision as to who is and who is not fit ; the second is that public opinion, in this country at all events, would not tolerate the suggestion for a moment. We shall have to make much longer strides towards extreme collectivist views before British individualism will sanction so great an interference with the springs of life, however muddy and tainted those springs may sometimes be.

It results then from our criticism on this head that the general relief to over-burdened motherhood suggested by the advocates of Birth Control would be least likely to take effect precisely in those cases where its advocates regard it as being most required.

Yet when this has been said we are left with a residuum of hard cases which so general a pronouncement does not touch. What about the mother already quoted who rightly dreads the birth of any further children tainted with venereal disease? What about the mother whose life will be endangered by child-bearing? Or the mother who has already borne, with more or less acquiescence, if not delight, a sufficiently large family both for her husband's income and for their joint efficient training? It seems to me that it is in such residual cases that the practice of Birth Control, under proper medical advice, may not only be allowed, but should be advocated if the result of discussion from a Christian standpoint be that it is not definitely wrong.

But this leads me to the third argument on behalf of it, which is in the nature of a rejoinder to the statement that "what is needed is not Birth

Control, but self-control." It is easy to understand how such a statement infuriates the passionate advocates of Birth Control ; for their whole case rests upon the suggestion that such absolute self-control is not merely unnatural but impossible.

It is also easy to see, from the Christian point of view, that their suggestion is certainly true of all who are not consciously trying to order their life as a whole in conformity with Christian ideals and demands. A passion which has behind it all the riot of a fecund creation, far too fecund for the requirements of man at the stage of development he has now reached, is impossible of control save by those who can meet it with a greater passion of a higher order.

But even supposing absolute control is possible without resort to mechanical means, is it from the Christian point of view desirable ? So eminent and credible a witness as Lord Dawson of Penn, who speaks not only with the high authority of an acknowledged chief in the medical profession, but with the authority also of a Christian man, says quite bluntly, " it is an impossible demand, and applied generally to married life, a *new*

demand, for a generation or so ago no attempt was made to control conception, and intercourse was unfettered except during late pregnancy and the parturition period. To speak of abstention and self-control in marriage as identical, of the necessity of married people 'to put their houses in order,' of 'self-control being more necessary than birth-control,' is to show misapprehension of the question at issue and to cause offence.

"Self-control denotes, not abstinence, but restraint; it envisages a sex-love which is free-minded, whole-hearted, prompted by mutual desire, which satisfies but does not satiate, and fits two people more not less for life's work.

"Continuous abstention means, not self-control, but self-denial. Such self-denial for the lengthy periods necessary for effectiveness is asking more than human nature can give, or should be asked to give. It is damaging to health, engenders irritability and discontent, and sets up a barrier inimical to mutual confidence and affection. It asks two people surrounded by the intimacies of love not to be lovers. The attempts at abstention, the struggle between physical needs and

conscience, produce conflicts damaging to mind and body, and if the attempts fail, as they assuredly do, the mind is left distressed."

Christian married people who realize that there is a great problem here will understand and respond to the meaning of the words : " It asks two people surrounded by the intimacies of love not to be lovers." The handling of this question by celibates, whether clerical or lay, is often instinctively felt to be faulty by those who have had the experience of married life and love, because it is apt to proceed on the assumption that abstinence within the marriage bond is, or should be, as easy and right as abstinence before marriage. This is to overlook completely the change that comes over the sex relationship when two lives have been completely devoted to one another.

It becomes then something much more and much greater than self-gratification. It becomes the crown of that mutual devotion and self-surrender which is the ideal of the Christian married state. The word " sacramental " is one that should not be lightly used ; but it is not overstating the sense of sacredness and beauty

and divine suggestiveness that may accompany the complete expression of human love to say that it has at its highest a sacramental nature. Probably few people think to-day of the marriage bond under the analogy of St. Paul, that it is a figure in some way suggestive of the union between Christ and His Church. But where that figure is accepted and understood this will not seem too great a claim to be made for the mutual and whole-hearted coming together of man and wife.

On more prosaic ground it ought to be better understood than it seems to be by those who starkly oppose "self-control" to Birth Control that in a normally happy marriage the presence, the endearments, the lover-like contacts of man and wife, which stop short of the supreme act of merging and self-surrender are, in the course of nature, the preludes to that act; and that where the final and supreme expression is denied the lesser expressions of love, which keep it alive and active, are in great danger of withering. It is a common experience of married folk that when entire abstinence is resorted to, save under the positive compulsion of illness or danger, which produces a

new emotional tone in the relations between man and wife (the protective and compassionate instinct then replacing that of equally mated comrades and lovers) there is a banking of the fires of mutual affection, a lowering of the entire pulse of married life, with the grave possibility of what was great-hearted love sinking, at best, into a very pedestrian friendship, at worst, into an ill-veiled animosity. Where this has resulted from indifference or selfishness taking the place of devoted self-surrender, it provides just the suitable breeding ground for jealousy, suspicion, lowness or sulkiness of temper, and in general those moods which may lead in the end to an absolute subversion of what was once a happy married life.

It is to mitigate and alleviate this very real danger to married happiness that Birth Control makes its most powerful appeal, and if no convincing ground for absolute condemnation of it in all cases can be brought against it, if it cannot be specifically condemned as wrong on clear Christian principles, there would seem to be a limited field for its application *within marriage*, by those who hold quite conscientiously that their

family has reached such dimensions as makes it wrong for them to undertake the responsibility of training and educating more children, or where on medical grounds child-bearing is definitely forbidden.

We pass therefore to the criticisms and objections taken to Birth Control that we may review them from the Christian standpoint.

The first and quite the most commonly held and felt is that there is something unnatural about it. This objection has been stated by Bishop Gore with his usual trenchancy. "I do not think it is possible to look at the place in biology of the sexual act without feeling that its primary purpose is the propagation of the species. I can hardly conceive any law which in the deepest sense can be called natural more emphatically than the law which unites the sexual act with the intention of offspring. The normal implication of the sexual act appears to me to be proclaimed by all nature, and if you take into account the teaching of Scripture, that, of course, is much emphasised. I maintain that our Lord's words describe the natural law, that is, the delight of the woman in the production of offspring, and the willingness to

bear the pain which is the price of it, because 'she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world,' and I cannot resist the impression that the whole of this movement is unnatural in its intention and disastrous in its consequences if it were successful, and so far as it is successful."

So strong a statement coming from a religious teacher justly revered in all the churches deserves the greatest respect and the closest scrutiny, all the more because it probably expresses the attitude of a great many Christian people who have tended to turn away from the subject with an instinctive aversion rather than to study it with the thoroughness which its possibilities demand.

Yet an argument which turns on the meaning of the word "unnatural" always needs close inspection. There are probably no more question-begging words in our language than "nature" and "unnatural"; and at least since the days of Marcus Aurelius with his apparently lofty statement that "everything is agreeable to me that is agreeable to thee, O Nature," and his description of the ideal of human life as being

that of living "conformably to nature," thinkers have needed to be on their guard as to the exact content given to the terms employed.

Man's entire ethical and civilized existence is "unnatural" from one point of view, in so far as it registers man's hardly won triumph over "nature" when it is conceived as the mere elements out of which man is gradually shaping himself and his world. It is not so long ago since Simpson had to put up a tremendous fight in this country against those who passionately denounced the use of chloroform in child-birth because it was "unnatural"; yet that was merely a single instance of man's power of using nature to overcome one of the hardships which, up till then, had been regarded as divinely appointed to the human race.

The whole record of such intermittent progress as man has made, both in physical and ethical matters, has been the record of a deeper understanding of the possibilities in nature which had been hitherto ignored. So that to take the existing state of man's knowledge of nature at any particular era and to lay it down as natural law that man should not interfere or go beyond it

would be to chain all science and invention and put a final stop to all causes and movements that seek to ameliorate the condition of the human race.

So in this particular connection it may well be argued against Bishop Gore and all who hold with him that while it would indeed be unnatural to hold in the fashion of Mr. Haldane* that sex intercourse may be entirely separated from those great ethical results in the life of husband and wife and family that have flowed from its gradual spiritualization in the life of man, there is nothing necessarily unnatural in using the means which man's inventiveness has put within man's power of so controlling the intercourse of sex that the moral and spiritual ends served by it may be realized without the necessary accompaniment of procreation.

From this point of view Birth Control may be just one further victory in that long struggle by which man seeks to use the powers of nature (including his own inventive powers) for that mastery of nature which is included in the Christian ideal for man. Even Bishop Gore

* Page 70.

may be reminded, with all respect, that for the Christian the last word is not "nature," but Christ; and that a thing is "unnatural" from the point of view of man's previous understanding of "nature" does not necessarily mean that it is wrong. It may mean, and the advocates of Birth Control would say that it does mean, that man is just taking one step further forward towards that putting of all things under his feet which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declared to be the ultimate ideal of human life, only realizable through Christ.

And that brings us to the citation of Christ's own word by Bishop Gore. There could be no better example of the danger of using an isolated word of Christ apart from the context. It is surely evident that Christ was not expressing any opinion whatever about the desirability, or otherwise, of the pain of child-birth; far less giving a judgment on a controversy whose very possibility could not have dawned upon the mind of His time. He was expressing in His own most moving way, through a human analogy, that appeals to any reasonably sympathetic human

soul, the faith that fortified Him for His passion and death, speaking with His own divine simplicity of the joy that He was to find through pain, the joy of redeeming at the cost of sacrifice. To interpret this as in any sense a divine prohibition of Birth Control, or even as a divine injunction to connect the intercourse of sex with procreation and the resulting pangs of child-birth as its one legitimate function and end in human life is plainly to wrest Scripture to a controversial purpose. "*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.*" The case against Birth Control will not be aided by such methods.

It is a mere fact of experience that whatever may be the case with animals, which may be regarded as being in a state of "nature" in what I have tried to exhibit as an objectionable and question-begging sense of that word, it is not true of human beings that the one end of the intercourse of sex is the production of children. That may be, personally I think it is, its primary end ; but with the coming of love in the human and Christian sense of that term the intercourse of sex has been sublimated to serve other spiritual purposes. I do not say more spiritual purposes,

for the deliberate and willed begetting of children is, as I have indicated, as solemn a spiritual responsibility as Christian men and women can possibly undertake ; but other spiritual purposes, amongst which may be singled out the supreme expression of mutual devotion, the keeping warm and active of the initial self-surrender by which two lives are made one, and thereby the rekindling of " that human heart by which we live " to all the finer and nobler ends of life.

It is precisely those who are most aware of the possibility of sin and self-indulgence in the use of invented means for controlling conception in some cases who will be most on their guard against a form of argument which would, even while seeming to move on Christian ground and from what look like Christian presuppositions, denounce it as sin in all cases.

A second argument which carries more weight with my mind is the statistical fact that contraceptive methods may be accompanied by a decline in the number of marriages.

Sir William Beveridge says, " The fall of the birth rate has been accompanied in many, though not all, countries by a fall in the marriage rate,

equally sudden and equally inexplicable by economic change. The agreement of date and the analysis of certain Dutch statistics suggest the same cause in both phenomena, *i.e.*, that the power of birth control is some countries at least (including Britain and Holland) has been used, and is being used, to postpone or avoid marriage rather than to encourage it." This would go to support the contention of those who maintain that Birth Control really means Birth Prevention, and that the total result of the sanctioning of contraceptive methods by Christian opinion, even in specific cases, would be the spread of immoral practices outside the marriage bond. That this is happening to some extent must be the impression of close observers of our social life ; and the moral damage to girls and boys who find it possible to secure the pleasures of self-gratification without the responsibilities of married life and parenthood does not belong to the statistical order of things which can be tabulated.

The fairest reply to this argument would seem to be that it is not the use of contraceptive means by married people who regard them as legitimate for themselves that is to be blamed for misleading

the unmarried, but the lack of a positive Christian ideal in the unmarried, coupled with the exploitation of their desires by those who have a commercial interest in the sale of contraceptives.

This again suggests the ramifications of the question into social and economic regions hitherto undreamed of. Should it be found that the marriage rate and birth rate drop below the point at which even the most ardent Malthusians desire to see them, one envisages the possibility of just such a struggle as has had to be waged against the Drink interest, this time against the interests which will by then have become ubiquitous and powerful in the trades concerned in the production and distribution of contraceptives; and anyone who has an adequate appreciation of the difficulties that beset reform in the one case will have a lively apprehension of what it may mean in the other.

A third argument is that there is no entirely satisfactory means of contraception, and that the practical results of its use are often medically harmful, even disastrous.

On this question, as on most others, doctors disagree. But it is worthy of note that Lady

Barrett states that "large numbers of young couples use contraceptives for some years and later seek advice because they want children, but find they cannot effect conception," and that "statistics were taken in America of the number of children in educated families, those who have used prevention and those who have not, and the children work out at smaller numbers among those who did not prevent than those who did."

Lord Dawson, on the other hand, denies the injurious effects and sums up his argument in a manner which suggests that we have a right to demand more light from his great profession than it has been hitherto willing to give us. He says, "I submit that the rightness or wrongness of contraception must not be judged by the merits or demerits of this or that device. What the Committee has primarily to decide is whether the use of suitable contraceptive devices is right in principle. If yes, the methods of contraception concern the medical profession. If those at present in use are deficient and harmful, it will be the duty of the doctors to find out those which are efficient and harmless. Up to now there has

been no systematic investigation of contraceptive methods by the medical profession in this country."

The conflict of this medical evidence makes Lord Dawson's closing plea all the more valid ; and obviously one great desideratum, before the Christian mind on the subject is determined and declared, is a thoughtful and well-balanced conclusion arrived at by Christian medical men and women, who, while primarily concerned with the merely physiological aspect of the subject, will not leave out of view and consideration its ethical implications and possibilities.

Anything like an agreed report on the whole matter by the British Medical Association would tend greatly not only to the clearing of public opinion and the creation of a Christian opinion that could meet the test of fact, but would make immeasurably simpler the legislation which sooner or later is bound to become necessary for the regulation of commercial activity and the repression of undesirable trading in contraceptive means known to be injurious to health, and in the selling of them to girls and lads of tender years.

But the fourth argument which I notice in

conclusion, because it is the one which has had the most powerful influence on my own mind, is that which may be described as based on the aesthetic element in Christian morality.

That there is such an element, though it is largely ignored by many Christian people, no one who has pondered on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be disposed to deny. For His grace was not the theological thing that the Church has made it. Rather was it primarily and most movingly grace in the sense which we associate more continually with its corresponding adjective, gracious. The goodness and the love of Jesus Christ were never divorced from beauty. He not only did loving things and spoke wonderful words ; He did them and spoke them with a sense of fitness and correspondence to personal needs and the infinite variations of human personality which is often very poorly reproduced in those who conceive of goodness as a static and unvarying entity, rather than as an energizing and mobile spirit that continually seeks new and fine means of most individual expression.

Those who have learned to view the Christian life as the endeavour to express, under the terms

of our own very differently circumstanced existence, the gracious spirit of Jesus, will understand and respond to the argument against the employment of any mechanical means for securing Birth Control which has been most ably stated by the Master of Balliol and his wife in a paper contributed to the Hibbert Journal for January, 1924.

One fact alone would serve to distinguish this article from thousands of others. It is the fact that it is the result of the spiritual collaboration of man and wife freely placing the result of their own combined spiritual experience within the married relationship at the service of others. No article that I have seen suggests more forcibly to my mind the true line along which a solution of this extremely difficult question will ultimately be found.

The article begins with a warning against expecting any solution of a great ethical question through purely mechanical means. (Readers of Carlyle cannot help being reminded of his vigorous condemnation of any "Morrison's pill" as a cure for deep-seated disorders in the body politic.)

" It is common enough knowledge (little as it modifies our conduct) that we fall an easy prey to any appearance of ready-made, simple devices for attaining the possibilities, or for solving the difficulties and ills of life. This tendency is at present leading a large number of people to speak and act as though a general knowledge and use of mechanical contrivances to prevent conception from following on sexual intercourse were not only an alleviation of immediate economic and personal difficulties, which it may be, but a satisfying solution of the whole intricate problem of the relations of men and women to each other and to society, which it cannot conceivably be."

Admitting the difficulties of rearing and training large families in our harassed post-war period they continue, " A time of difficulty and stress is just the time when it is important to preserve an attitude of mind far-seeing enough to have within its range the ideal and the ideally possible as well as the actual and immediately practicable, the need of a steady whole humanity as well as the dangers of the moment."

In consonance with that large and generous

aim they advance various arguments against the use of contraceptives centring on what I have tried to describe as the aesthetic element in Christian morality, and above all on the interference of any mechanical means with " the perfect equality of giving and taking " which is love's spiritual essence.

Physically this means the setting up of stimuli that would in their turn produce reactions leading to conception and child-birth which are consciously frustrated ; imaginatively it involves repression and negation, and does not offer the strength of exercise, but the weakness of a constant mechanical support ; and spiritually it is uneconomic, frustrating the most potent and vital of man's powers. " 'Love is a thing as any spirit free,' and it is certain it can never choose for its ultimate path a way that involves mechanical restriction and negation."

By way of positive contribution the writers suggest that while it is perfectly true that sex intercourse is a real and can be a hallowed symbol of love, it is not the only symbol, and has indeed shared the fate of most symbols by coming to be worshipped for itself, rather than for that which

it symbolizes. Love is not tied to this, " but can create an infinite variety of expressions."

Perhaps it is too much to ask that in a brief article this germinal thought, which may hold a vast amount of practical suggestiveness in its very compressed idealism, might have been further developed ; but any Christian mind can see at once the track which is here indicated.

It is, as so many others have pointed out working from a very different angle, that man is over-sexed for his present needs ; that his powers of reproduction are vastly too great for his physical and even for his spiritual capacity of rearing and educating the offspring that might potentially be his ; and that therefore the sex-urge in man must in one way or another be made subordinate to his spiritual conception of his entire life. That we have steadily indicated throughout as being for us the possibility of becoming ever more truly and fully Sons and Daughters of God, with the content and meaning supplied to those words by the Sonship of Jesus Christ.

It has been argued, not without ground in experience, that the crowning act of sex love,

even though it does not lead and is not intended to lead to the procreation of children, has spiritual meaning and value for those who use it as a means of self-surrender and mutual devotion, and that accordingly the use of contraceptual means is not to be denied to Christian men and women. The contention of the writers of the Hibbert Journal article would tend to cut the ground from underneath that argument by the counter-argument that this method of expressing human love and devotedness may become outworn and unnecessary in the personal, if not in the racial history, and that accordingly one great duty for Christian men and women would be to see if love, in its freedom and grace, is not calling them to reconsider their ways, is not indeed prompting them to ways of expression that may be as adequate and will not involve that sense of frustration, of something underhand and dodging which many minds instinctively feel to be connected with the use of any mechanical means of avoiding the possibility of conception.

One can only at present express a personal view. I confess that the argument moves me as no other has done ; and that while much remains

to be said yet one can at least emphatically agree with the authors that "it is the furthest seeing minds amongst us that ultimately set our standards."

Is it possible, then, in the light of our examination of the arguments for and against to come to any definite conclusion?

In Scots Law there is a useful proviso that where evidence is very conflicting, and a case cannot be regarded as having been satisfactorily debated, the verdict of "Not Proven" may be returned. That seems to me the most desirable verdict, according to the evidence, in the present case. But while a person who has "tholed his assize" cannot be brought up again for trial before the court, that is happily not so with a practice concerning which a great moral decision falls to be made, and must ultimately be made with absolute Christian conviction.

The desiderata towards coming to such a conviction as will carry a full weight of Christian authority behind it seem to be these:

(1) A really strenuous endeavour on the part of the Church to present in all the ways suggested in a previous chapter a truly Christian ideal of

marriage. This would at once rule out the possibility of regarding the practice of Birth Control outside the marriage relationship as anything but an immoral grasping at self-gratification without the acceptance of responsibility. Within the married relationship it would cause a real searching of heart as to whether Birth Control is being practised for the sake of the children or to indulge the selfishness of husband and wife.

(2) A far franker attitude to it on the part of all Christian people, and especially of Christian married people. It is, after all, in the great forum of conversation and informal talk that great moral issues are shaped and await their decision from the bringing to bear upon them of the authority of Christ. One would greatly desiderate a free interchange of views among married people as to the results, in their own experience of the life of their spirits, of the practice of abstinence, or of Birth Control, or of both.

(3) A definite endeavour on the part of the medical profession to rescue the subject from the hands of quacks of all sorts, both the obvious ones and those who are less easily detected because of the high-sounding language beneath which their

quackery is veiled. The medical profession ought to be made to understand that any high-priestly attitude on their part, any attempt to pose as guardians of a mystery which must be hid from the people whose concern and right is to have the best knowledge that can be put at their disposal, is as antiquated in medicine as in religion. One of the most obvious requirements for a real pronouncement on the question is a dispassionate and really scientific endeavour to get at the facts on their purely medical side ; and for that we still have to wait.

(4) In the meantime the Church, through its ministers and faithful people, can only commend the subject to every man and every woman's conscience.

This is not the weak and colourless statement that it might be taken to be. For if the individual conscience is brought to bear upon the matter, instead of individual resentment at what seems a new and disturbing idea, or individual compliance with what seems to offer an easy way out of a difficulty which in the last resort is a spiritual difficulty, then the conditions will be present for arriving at a real decision in the light of all the facts, squarely faced.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH AND ITS DISCIPLINE

In the course of our argument hitherto we have encountered the fact that the management by men and women of their sex life, and the expression which it finds in marriage, the establishment of a home, and the training of children is not, and from the nature of the case, cannot be, a matter of purely private concern. Their success or failure in these relations is so obviously a concern of the State that a mass of legislation, which grows ever greater and more complex, endeavours to relate these intensely intimate concerns of individuals to the welfare of the community in which they are not only husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, but fellow-citizens with the other members of the State.

It is inevitable that the Church should be even more deeply concerned with their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the duties to which they are

pledged when they aspire to its membership ; for the Church claims to guide and control those inward dispositions of the heart and mind of which the State takes no cognisance. The claim of the State is limited to outward behaviour ; so long as a man is a law-abiding citizen the State is content. But the Church's claim goes infinitely deeper. It demands at least an approach in its members to an inward disposition, a state of heart and mind and will, not utterly unworthy of those who claim to have taken Christ as the Lord of all their life. While success and failure to meet this searching demand can only be tested by overt acts the interest of the Church is not and can never be confined to such outward acts, except in so far as they are a mirror and index of the state of soul which they express.

Consequently the Church has always claimed the right to regulate the terms under which it admits to its membership. It has the power of the keys ; and if it can open its doors of membership to such as it judges to be in a right disposition to the fulfilment of the demands which it makes, not in its own name, but in the name of Christ, it must obviously claim the power to assist,

for their own good, such of its members as seem to be failing in their duties, and to declare that such as it shall find to be obdurate in opposition to what it conceives to be the plain requirement of Christ can no longer be regarded as within its membership.

No subject has proved more difficult to handle wisely in the long story of the Church's struggle to approximate to the mind of Christ ; no subject demands more imperative reconsideration in the light of that mind as it is being revealed to us to-day.

It is interesting, as a matter of history, to notice that it was in connection with this question, as it arose under the stress of persecution, when waverers lapsed from the Church and subsequently sought readmission to it, that the powers of the early presbyter were advanced until in the person of the bishop, and more especially the bishop of the metropolitan city of Rome, they came to transcend those of the ordinary presbyter and to replace those of the Christian community as a whole, in which the power of discipline had at first reposed.

It was, again, in connection with the Church's

use of its discipline that the great upheaval of the Reformation took its rise. The first attack of the reformers was not upon the theology of the Church, but on its practice. It was, as every one knows, the hawking of indulgences that first aroused Luther to his passionate attack upon the Church in which he had been cradled, from which, in the early days, he had no intention of departing.

The battle inevitably developed all along the line, and the attack was finally concentrated upon that erroneous thought of God which underlay the whole Roman conception of salvation. Every error in practice is ultimately bound up with an erring conception of God ; but we ought to remember that the struggle arose first of all in connection with the practice of the Church ; the endeavour to reform its theology came second.

In consonance with this we find all the reformers agreed, when their own day came for framing churches and constitutions, that along with the right preaching of the Word, and a right administration of the Sacraments, a third indispensable note or mark of a true church is "the right administration of Discipline."

In Puritan England and Presbyterian Scotland,

as equally in the great communities descended from them in the new world, that attempt was carried out with great rigour, with a magnificent, though wholly unsuccessful, desire to make the Church so pure as to be worthy to be called the bride of Christ. It is only shallowness of mind or partisan spirit which sees nothing admirable in the efforts of the reforming churches to inculcate and make effective in their membership a high standard of " holy living and holy dying," to use a description of the Christian life which is none the less noble because this present age hardly begins to comprehend what it means.

It is easy to be amused at Burns' bitter mockery of the church which sought to bring him and other sinners to repentance ; impossible to imagine any church seeking to do it now in a form so public and so provocative both of resentment and hypocrisy as did the Scottish church of his day ; but it is equally plain that his church was endeavouring to accomplish, in however mistaken a fashion, such an amendment in Burns' character as would have rid, had it been effectual, both his life and his poetry of many a needless stain.

That it was ineffective in Scotland, and wher-

ever else it was tried, is now apparent both as a matter of history and from that plainer view of the true nature of discipline which ought to be achieved to-day. As a matter of history the reformers' effort to restore discipline has failed; for there is not a church in Christendom to-day built upon the thoughts and plans of the Reformation which even attempts to exercise discipline in the manner of its founders. In the Scottish Church which is best known to me, discipline for "private and local cases" is exercised through the Kirk Session, a body elected by the congregation itself, for the oversight of all the spiritual concerns of the congregation, not least the souls' health of its members. Till within recent years it was fairly common for gross cases of drunkenness and fornication to be brought to the notice of this body, which thereupon summoned the offenders before it, and admonished them with regard to their sin. If expressions of penitence were made they were then re-admitted to the Christian fellowship; but all this was privately done and the appearance of the offenders before the congregation, which was a former requisite of discipline, was never either attempted or re-

garded as desirable. Other sins, and those which according to the plain teaching of Jesus are likely to be even more damaging to the soul than sins of the flesh, sins like pride, malice, evil-speaking, were never made the subject of even such a maimed and curtailed rite ; and the modern tendency is to evade the necessity for discipline altogether.

Where the offence is but a symbol of indifference to the church and all it stands for in human life the tendency of the offender is to slip out of attendance and church connection, and in many cases this happens without remonstrance on the part of the church, either through its official guides and duly constituted leaders, or of his fellow-members. Where the offence is found in conjunction with some real degree of penitence it is often slurred over and the offender returns to the privileges of church membership with as little as possible made of it on both sides ; or—and this is particularly the case in great cities—attaches himself to some other congregation of the same church, or to some other denomination where too close scrutiny of his standing in the church is not insisted on.

The bearing of the divisions of the Church on the question of discipline is obvious and was stated with his usual brilliance by Neville Figgis in the chapter on "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," contributed to the third volume of the Cambridge Modern History: "If toleration is admitted by the State there is no danger in Church Discipline because there are rival churches; excommunication has ceased to be tyrannical by becoming futile."

That it has ceased not only to be tyrannical, but to have any effective exercise at all, not only in Scotland but throughout our Reformed Churches in Britain, is borne out by the statements which have been very kindly supplied to me by representative men in churches south of the Border.

"In the Church of England," writes an Anglican whose name carries weight far beyond the confines of his own church, "official discipline in relation to the laity has lapsed altogether, except on the rare occasion when a Parson objects to the marriage of the divorced, or refuses Communion to a deceased wife's sister. There is no general rule of discipline, and in very many

parishes little attempt to enforce a standard of conduct or even of Church attendance, except by private visiting and in individual warnings. Proposals to revive the system of public discipline have been made from time to time, but I know of hardly any cases in which these have resulted in practice."

One who is set to teach Pastoral Theology to the students of a Wesleyan Methodist College says, "The discipline over private members exists, I fear, mainly in theory, as there is natural reluctance to exercise it. It is the function of the Leaders' Meeting in each church to exercise this oversight and discipline. Whenever an accusation is brought, the Leaders' Meeting tries the case and sentence is pronounced later by the minister. There is always the opportunity of an appeal to a higher court, up to the Conference. I may say that cases of this kind are exceedingly rare. The charges generally have to do with palpable misdoings or with business defalcations. The sins of the spirit are in my experience never mentioned."

The condition prevailing in the Congregational Church is described thus: "The older methods

are gone. Modern conditions make them difficult. I know of one church at least where an action for libel was threatened because of a decision taken at a Church meeting, which seemed to reflect upon the character of a member of the church. The action was only averted by the payment of a certain sum, decided by the arbitrator selected. There is no regular system of removing names because of defects in moral character. The general custom is to trust that those who are living wantonly outside the Christian standards will not care to remain in the Church. The question of what is deadly sin in this modern world has scarcely been considered in most churches. Yet the younger members are beginning to wonder why the drunkard should be counted to have ruled himself out and the speculator should be high up in the councils of the church."

These indications, gathered from representative churches and churchmen in our land, are sufficient to substantiate the statement that as a matter of history the reformed conception of discipline has broken down.

It is even more germane to our purpose to ask

why this should have been the case. The answer is that its failure was inherent in the less than Christian view taken by the reformers of the nature of discipline and the manner in which it should be exercised.

It was stated above that, substantially, the attack of the Reformation was upon a faulty conception of God. While little disposed to take my stand with the somewhat clamorous band of journalistic, rather than theological, thinkers who would have us believe that the Reformation was a stupidity, and a mistake, I think it is becoming manifest to its most sympathetic supporters that the fault of the Reformation was that its attack was not mistaken but too partial. The Reformation carried with it only too many of the faulty notions of the unreformed Church.

The Roman view of God conceived of Him fundamentally as a law-giver and judge; and consonantly with that view it found His vicegerent in one who was an earthly law-giver and judge, expressing His authority through the legally constituted channels of the Church. The Reformers revolted against the authority of the Church, but replaced it with the authority of the

Bible, which was still regarded from the legal standpoint. The immense gains of the Reformation, indubitable by me, were due to the plain fact that those who have the Bible in their hands and use it as thoroughly as our reforming forefathers did, cannot misread the character of God quite so thoroughly as those who accept the representation of His character made to them by the external authority of a Church which at the core of its thinking conceives the relations between God and man as those of law-giver and subject. The entire conception of merit, which was at the back of the sale of indulgences and the Church's traffic in pardons and the like, sprang most obviously and directly from this imperfectly Christianized view of the character of God.

It was a step in advance, and a great step, when Luther asserted on the basis of his reading of the Epistle to the Galatians that the whole conception of human merit falls to the ground when we see that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself ; that a man cannot by any possibility be just before his God ; that we must therefore throw ourselves unreservedly upon the

love of God revealed in Christ and be justified, if justified at all, by faith.

But it was only one step in advance. For Luther, like Paul to some extent before him, was still entangled in the legal attitude of mind in which he had been reared ; and he still clung to the idea of merit, transferring it now to Christ, by whose merit in the sight of God the sinner is vicariously justified. The old legal idea remained. It had been shifted back a step, and a great step ; but it had not been altogether removed, as the working out in Protestantism of the vicarious theory of the Atonement has abundantly shown. In its crudest form that still resolves the relation between God and man into a legal one. The offended law-giver and judge pardons because He has been bought off by the transcendent merit of Christ.

Such a thought of God is still infra-Christian ; it moves in a different circle of ideas from the thought of Jesus. He thought of God, and has taught us to think of Him, not as an Almighty Law-giver and Judge, but as a Father, whose nature it is to desire the return of His sinful children to Him, who seeks no satisfaction to

outraged law, but seeks the only satisfaction a Father can feel, reconciliation with those who through the constraint of His love are seeking to be worthy to be called His sons.

The exaltation of the Bible to the place of an infallible authority from which the Pope had been deposed in Reformation thinking was all of a piece with this imperfect conception of God. The mind of the law-giver and judge was to be sought now not in the external Church but in the external Word. Just because the study of the Word by the individual inevitably leads to a truer comprehension and knowledge of God revealed in Christ than mere acceptance on the bare authority of the Church, the step taken at the Reformation gave a mighty impulse to the individual conscience and cast the individual mind more consciously upon the resources of that illumination of the Holy Spirit which the Reformers saw more clearly than many of their successors to be necessary to the understanding of the authoritative Word.

But it was inevitable that with a legal conception of God underlying even their reformed thinking their conception of discipline should have

a legal cast; and the imperfections which naturally belong to such a conception have worked out historically to the abuse, failure, and consequent cessation in large part of the methods of discipline by which they hoped to keep the Church pure.

Anyone who has read a book like Grey Graham's "Scottish Life in the Eighteenth Century" can see at once that when, to the measure of legal ways of conceiving of God that still adhered to Reformation thought, there was added the blight of a dry and unevangelical attitude to religion as a whole, the power of discipline became an intolerable tyrrany. Delation and espionage were carried to a length which made life in small communities intolerable; small offences against ecclesiastical convention became of greater moment than the truly damning sins of hypocrisy, spiritual pride, and unbrotherly feeling; and only the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saved the Church of Scotland from withering into a bare ecclesiastical institution from which all spiritual power had departed.

The same thing is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of

the Churches in England. Any real approximation to the ideal of what the Church of Christ ought to be has come not through any attempt to exercise a legal discipline, with its necessary endeavour to inflict pains and penalties upon offenders, however slight these may be compared with the "good old days" when the Church was prepared to confiscate goods and burn bodies in order to save souls; but it has come through times of renewed spiritual life when the various Churches have sought in the spirit of the Master to "seek and to save that which was lost," whether the loss had happened inside or outside the organized Church.

For surely it is obvious that if everything within the Church's life must be regulated and constituted by its thought of God, no church that has grasped Christ's idea of God can any longer imagine that the exercise of a discipline whose aim is to produce social excommunication, or the infliction of pains and penalties of any save a spiritual sort, is to be desired or attempted by the Body of Christ. The control of his "flock" by the more bullying type of "shepherd" bears no resemblance whatever to the authority of the

great Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, who gained His authority by the exercise of a love so pure that He laid down His life for the sheep. The only power any church of Christ should desire to exercise is power within its own domain, that is, moral and spiritual power; and the sole aim of discipline should be the production in offending members of the spirit of true penitence and their reclamation for the full service of the Christian society.

If that aim, and the means used to reach it, fail, there is nothing to deplore in the fact that men have discovered that the Church has no right to threaten them with penalties other than those spiritual penalties which are inherent in their removal from, or deliberately chosen abstention from, the benefits of membership in the Christian fellowship. According to the plain teaching of Jesus hell is a real and tremendous fact of spiritual experience; but the Church cannot send any man there. All that the Church can do is most affectionately and solemnly to warn a man of the danger that he seems to run, in the judgment of his fellow-members, of casting himself into hell and abiding there, by deliberate and

impenitent continuance in any course of conduct or thinking which imperils the life of his soul.

The real point of our charge, therefore, against the reformed churches is not that they have quietly abandoned, or allowed to come into practical desuetude, a method and power of discipline which carried at the heart of it ideas and conceptions that were infra-Christian, but that they have not replaced it with a discipline which would be more in accord with the mind of Christ. That such discipline is absolutely necessary to the effective continuance of the work of all the churches is becoming as clear to-day as the fact that none of them has thought out the implications of their altered, and as I consider, their more Christian conception of the character of God.

The need of discipline has been forcibly stated by R. H. Tawney, writing as a sympathetic outsider when in his book *The Acquisitive Society*, he wrote : " A rule of life, a discipline, a standard of conduct in the social relations which make up the texture of life for the mass of mankind, the establishment of these among its own members and their maintenance by the corporate con-

science of the Christian society is among the most vital tasks of any church which takes its religion seriously. Either a church is a society or it is nothing. But if a society is to exist it must possess a corporate mind and will. And if the church, which is a Christian society, is to exist, its mind and will must be set upon that type of conduct which is specifically Christian. Hence the acceptance by its members of a rule of life is involved in the very essence of the church. . . . The demand that the church should possess and exercise powers of moral discipline is not, therefore, the expression of that absurd, if innocent, pose, a romantic and indiscriminating Mediævalism. If the church has not the authority to discipline its own members, which is possessed by the humblest secular association, from an athletic club to a trade union, it is not a society at all."

This demand, thus urged upon the Church by an outsider, is only the clear expression of what is being increasingly, if confusedly, felt by those who are within.

In the statements from representative churchmen from which I have already quoted, there is striking unanimity not only in the con-

fession that older methods of discipline have failed, but also in the feeling that they have failed because they deserved to do so, and that there is an imperative call for their replacement by methods which would approximate more closely to congruity with the thought of God which Christ has given us.

The Anglican representative states that "a good deal more attention to problems of discipline is being given by the younger men than was the case twenty years ago, but few believe in any legal or formal treatment of moral issues. This is partly reaction against the emphasis upon 'Thou shalt not,' and partly dislike of the concentration on Sin, and partly a doubt as to whether Christians, as followers of Christ's Method, are ever justified in refusing fellowship or judging others. . . . It is quite certain that we have lost our system of discipline. Many of us would not raise a finger to restore it, and this is not, I think, due to moral laxity so much as to a conviction that we are not 'Under Law,' and that the tendency to reduce Christianity to a neatly ordered Moral Code is a reversion to Moses and Judaism."

The Congregationalist writes: "There is far too little sense of the duty of the community towards its own members when they fall away. There would be in many quarters a sense of relief if unworthy members removed their names, but little thought of reclaiming them or standing by them. Speaking generally after nearly thirty years in the ministry I am amazed to think how very few cases of direct violation of the Christian moral standard for the individual life I have known. Of course there may have been many kept from the eye of the world ; but that was true in the days of the strictest discipline. The faults of our people, I am convinced, are not of the kind formerly dealt with by church discipline. I should feel a little more easy about this if it did not imply that our appeal is too much to the respectable. We have practically no divorced people, no ex-prisoners, no "drunks," no thieves among our members ; but unhappily we have none, or very few in our congregations. We don't touch them. Very few of the inmates of workhouses are Congregationalists. That is called a fine thing by some people. I think it is a confession of failure."

It becomes obvious then that discipline of some sort is essential to the constitution of the Church of Jesus Christ, that it is in danger of falling into desuetude, partial or almost complete, and that there is general dissatisfaction with the ideas that underlay former attempts at its exercise. Our contention would be, then, that in the Reformed churches one of the clamant needs of the day is to think out, and seek to exercise, a system of discipline that will deserve the name of Christian.

Obviously it cannot have a legal conception at the heart of it and remain Christian. It cannot conceive the relation between the Church and an erring member in the spirit of a prosecuting counsel, anxious for a verdict and an award of swingeing damages. It must have at its very core the thought of God's love to all His children, unfailing and unwearied ; of His desire that they should be worthy to be called His children ; of His appointed means to that end in the fellowship of the Church, which is that part of His family most conscious of His Fatherhood ; and it must therefore seek to treat offenders against the spirit of Christ in every relation of life as brethren to be won, not as criminals to be sentenced.

Its penalties can, in the nature of the case, only be the penalties to which those who are persistently impenitent condemn themselves ; its declaration that any member of the body has ceased to be such can only be a statement after the event, a solemn recognition by the Church that those who have been in membership with it have by their own acts or choice ceased to be so. And when that does happen the responsibility upon the Church does not cease ; its efforts to win them back again should be unremitting.

Surely we have the nature of such a discipline and its method of application suggested in the classical passage in St. Matthew (xviii, 15-17), upon which so different a conception of discipline has been built. It is thus rendered by Moffatt : " If your brother sins, go and reprove him, as between you and him alone. If he listens to you, then you have won your brother over ; but if he will not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every case may be decided on the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church, and if he refuses to listen to the church, treat him as a pagan or a tax-gatherer. I tell you truly, whatever you

prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

The authenticity of the passage has been much contested by critics ; but its substantial fidelity to the spirit of Jesus, which is all that matters for our purpose, will hardly be doubted. If, here and there, it suggests reflections by the early Church arising out of experience in putting the spirit of the Master into practice, it is none the less suggestive as to the methods the Church ought to apply, nor any the less an effective condemnation of some of the methods it has employed in ages when it was less desirous of knowing His mind.

The first thing that emerges with absolute clearness is that discipline is a function of the entire Christian fellowship. It is the duty of every member to be concerned with the soul's health of his fellow member. While it is obvious that the Church must have some organ by which to express its common mind, as will appear later in our treatment—as it appears later in the passage itself—there is absolutely nothing to suggest that discipline is the concern only of a priesthood, or an official ministry.

The Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which is also a New Testament doctrine, has suffered the fate of all assertions of the rights of man by tending to be divorced from the responsibilities which are, to a Christian, the more impressive aspect of all rights. When the Reformers threw off the yoke of priest and Pope they were committing not only the ministers and church courts they proceeded to put in their place, but the whole body of the Christian people, to the yoke of Christ, whose demand is infinitely more searching than that of any external authority. Membership in a church of free men means not irresponsibility for one's fellows but solicitude for all. If " a Christian man is most free lord of all and subject to none," it is only as Luther saw also because he is " the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one."

The clearest pre-requisite, therefore, of an effective restoration of discipline in the Church is a livelier apprehension of what church membership itself involves. If we are, as Paul laboured to prove to his converts, really members one of another, then we cannot be indifferent to the

condition of our fellow members. There is no need to repeat in feebler form the unanswerable argument of the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Unfortunately there is no need, either, to affirm that the sense of membership in our modern churches is so weak that most of us do not feel that we have lost a limb when some fellow member becomes totally indifferent to the worship and service of the church, or pursues some course of conduct which is incapable of being reconciled with the plain demand of Christ.

That some Christians still feel this to some extent, and that most of the effective discipline at present being exercised in the Church is really, however unofficially, exercised by them, is plain. In the Church of England, to quote the statement already referred to, "In many parishes, through Communicant Guilds, or some such Societies, the Laity are encouraged to keep in close touch with one another, and to look after the Members of their Guild if they show signs of lapsing. Such Guilds have, in general, a simple rule of life, emphasizing both the obligations of public worship and some aspect or aspects of Christian character. I am not merely thinking

of the temperance and purity organizations, but rather of the groups and fellowships in our churches, which try to study and work to realize the Christian way of life. These hardly exert any definite discipline upon their members, but when effective, they serve in fact to set and maintain a high level of Christian life."

Definite or not in the ecclesiastical sense, this is definite enough discipline in its early and most hopeful stage in the New Testament sense ; and one can only say " *O si sic omnes.*" There is in such Guilds and Societies at least some approach to the New Testament conception that we are members one of another and that we are responsible for one another's progress or decline in the Christian way of life.

To outsiders the Class Meeting of the Methodists would seem to offer an example of such fellowship at what might be almost an ideal height ; and where the class meeting is vigorous and hearty doubtless there is a true realization of its ends in mutual helpfulness. But if report speaks truly the power of the class meeting is on the wane, and there is difficulty in securing regular attendance and a real concern for spiritual progress.

In the Churches in Scotland, organized on a presbyterian basis, the delegation of the people's authority in spiritual matters to the minister and elders, constituting what is called the Kirk Session, has led to the growing sense that concern for the spiritual welfare of the membership is almost exclusively their concern ; though here too the existence of societies, study circles, and guilds of various kinds does bring into play some effective regard for the soul's health of fellow members. It may be all the more effective in that it is not consciously put forth. The sense of *esprit de corps*, powerfully fostered by such organizations, consisting often of those of nearly the same age, moulding experience, and stage of spiritual development, has often been a most powerful factor in helping to keep Christian ideals alive. It is the extension of that spirit to the whole corporate membership to the various churches that is the real desideratum for the revival of an effective discipline ; and behind that lies a deeper individual apprehension of what God has done for each of us in Christ ; of the fellowship with others into which that experience at once brings us ; and of the responsi-

bilities which that fellowship involves. Not least among these is the great truth expressed three centuries ago by "Golden" John Hales, in his tract "On the Power of the Keys": to save a soul every man is a priest.

The second thing which lies on the surface of the passage in Matthew is that the true method in discipline is to proceed from private to public remonstrance by stages which are well marked.

The initial step is to be taken by those nearest to the member who is regarded as having offended against the fellowship, and is best taken in the informal conversation which close friendship makes possible at any time. How many people now outside the Christian fellowship might have been retained within it if the word in season had been spoken at the right time by someone whose love to them was indubitable! How many slip into careless and devious ways just because the admonitions of a really friendly soul, acting as a kind of externalized conscience, have been lacking! It is plain that in many sins the greatest peril is the simple one of self-deception as to their real nature and possibility; and one clear part of Christian duty is that we should "ad-

monish one another," which Paul takes to be a sign both of real brotherhood and true Christian goodness (Romans xv. 14).

And this is one of the cases where a literal adherence to the New Testament text is obviously desirable ; in that we should " go " and tell our brother of his fault ; not " write." For the experience of Robert Louis Stevenson must often have been repeated by those who are honestly solicitous for the true welfare of their fellow-members in Christ : " Not long ago I wrote a letter to a friend which came near involving us in a quarrel ; but we met, and in personal talk I repeated the worst of what I had written, and added worse to that ; and with the commentary of the body it seemed not unfriendly either to hear or to say. . . . We have legible countenances; things that cannot be said look eloquently through the eyes, and the soul, not locked into the body as a dungeon, dwells ever on the threshold with appealing signals. Groans and tears, looks and gestures, a flush or a paleness, are often the most clear reporters of the heart, and speak more directly to the hearts of others. The message flies by these interpreters in the least space of

time, and the misunderstanding is averted in the moment of its birth." Paul, who has left us such intensely human records of his endeavours after the true sort and method of discipline, would have approved that passage, for he wishes he could get into the very presence of the Galatians, about whom he is at his wits' end, that they might see from his face and the tone of his voice what he fears they may misunderstand in his letter (Galatians iv, 20).

Plainly then the most efficient and the most hopeful stage of real Christian discipline is that informal and personal sort to which all members of the Christian fellowship are really pledged, which needs no official initiation or process, by which every faithful member can help to "save his brother."

The next stage is also unofficial. Should a private remonstrance fail we are to go with two or three like-minded people, such as have their hearts in the right place (and the congregation is sadly unfortunate which does not number many such in its ranks), men and women who are bent on winning the offender, not on punishment or excommunication.

There is a deep principle involved here: the principle enunciated by Christ Himself when He said that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in the midst. The right of private judgment to which Protestantism attaches so fundamental an importance is not that pure subjectivism which its opponents have so often suggested. It is a right exercised only in obedience to Christ and the guidance of His Holy Spirit. The chance that any single individual may err is frankly acknowledged ; and he may err in regard both to his judgment and treatment of a brother whom he supposes to have erred. That is one main reason why the help of other members is to be invoked. If they unite to seek the guidance of their common Lord and are agreed in their judgment, using the word not in the legal but in the practical sense, then it must become a matter of grave concern to any member of the church who has any real desire for fellowship with Christ and the brethren, that he is regarded, by the agreed voice of those who have come to consider his case in real and unaffected love, as being in a position of spiritual danger.

That such a conference carries weight with those who will not listen to a single and private remonstrance I have found to be a fact of experience ; and I feel convinced that if this part of New Testament practice were regularly and unofficially exercised the final step would not very often be required at all.

That step is that the whole matter be referred to the church ; which means in practice the official person or court which the church recognizes as empowered to deliver its authoritative opinion : priest, minister, Kirk Session, Leaders' Meeting, or meeting of the entire congregation, according to the practice and constitution of the various churches. This is the last resort, instead of the first, as it is now, one fears, in many cases ; and the solemn appeal of the authority which the church itself has constituted, under Christ, as the organ by which its common mind is declared may be successful where less formal means have failed. But it is obvious that the church which wishes to exercise discipline on New Testament lines will use every other available means and exhaust their potency before it takes official action at all.

Only then, when all methods have been tried, and tried in vain, is the church's sentence to be pronounced. And what is it? The purely spiritual one that he who has been hitherto regarded as a brother and fellow member is now to be ranked with pagans, publicans, and tax-gatherers; that is to say, with those whom Christ especially sought, for whose redemption from careless and sinful ways He put forth His full powers of persuasion, appeal and love, that would take no refusal or know any stay in its patience.

Surely it is here that the failure of the church's discipline has fallen most lamentably short of the ideal that this passage holds up before it. All the statements I have received from other churches only serve to confirm and buttress the opinion suggested by my own experience that the church, in the main, heaves a sigh of relief when scandalous or careless members slip out of its community or are solemnly removed by the official action of the church. The usual feeling is that the church's responsiblity is now at an end.

Could anything be less true to the spirit of the Good Shepherd; who rejoiced more over the

one sheep that had gone astray then over the ninety and nine ; who gave Himself unstintedly to the fellowship that cost Him so much every way with tax-gatherers and sinners ; whose unwearied pursuit of ourselves till it brought Him to the Agony and the Cross is our one sufficient reason for the hope that is in us ? All that the church can do in excommunication is to register its opinion, which it believes to be the opinion of Christ Himself, that one who was once a member in His body has by his own action and stubborn impenitence cast himself out of it ; but there is no final closing of the door against his return. For as I read the New Testament the one sin which has no forgiveness, either here or hereafter, is just the sin of wilful impenitence for sin which is known to be such in the conscience of the sinner. And until that stage is reached in any man the plain duty of the church is to seek all men for the fellowship of Christ ; and more especially those who have once been of that fellowship.

This leads us insensibly to the final idea underlying the whole passage in Matthew, which is that discipline being in its nature a spiritual

process, can only be rightly carried out in accord with the whole spirit of Christ as that is being revealed to His living Church.

This means both a greater sensitiveness and a deeper sympathy than marked the older type of discipline, conceived in a legal way and carried out by methods analogous to those of the law-court. The plain result of legalism has always been Pharisaism ; which means in practice condemnation of overt and sensual sin, whose results are flagrant, hypocrisy in regard to the sins which go deeper into the texture of the mind and heart and can only be inferred from the entire spiritual condition of the soul. All the statements which I have quoted tend to support the contention that the Reformed churches have taken the way of least resistance, which has been the Pharisaic way of attempting a certain measure of discipline in cases like drunkenness and fornication, but allowing pride, malice, envy, uncharitableness and covetousness to go unchecked.

Most thoughtful men will re-echo Mr. Tawney's demand that the Church greatly needs a truer sensitiveness as to what constitutes sin in our modern world. No sensible man will seek to

restore the positive laws of the Mediæval Church against usury ; but every sensitive man will desire that both he and his fellow-members should have a standard as to the making and the spending of money which can face the statements of Christ as to the dangers of wealth and the damnable offence of oppressing the weak. The Church will not seek to be a ruler or law-giver in such matters any more than its Master ; but it will certainly require of its members that their conscience in these concerns should not be notoriously harder than that of many who are outside its communion.

An effective discipline must cover the entire life of a Christian lived in the world of to-day ; and while it is an utter impossibility, recognized by the Church in the more or less frank abandonment of its former attempts at a legal type of discipline, to proceed against its members in the fashion of a court of law inquiring into an alleged swindle, it can through its unofficial membership, as well as through its pulpits and church courts, reveal the high demand of Christ that all wealth, not only the money that is usually thought of under that title, but wealth of brain and hand and

eye as well, is for the Christian a stewardship, of which he must render an account hereafter to Christ, and to the body of Christ here and now. The discussion of the difference that this conception would make does not fall within the province of this book, as it has been already handled in other volumes of this series* ; but some reference to the extension of the demands of Christian discipline, conceived as an expression of the love of the Christian community, seeking the health and wholeness of its members in all relations of life, was inevitable even in our own discussion, which has centred mainly around the more personal and intimate relationships of human life.

With a new sensitiveness there must also go to make the discipline of the church effective a far deeper sympathy. Offenders are never won by legal proceedings ; and the entire aim of the Church in its discipline is to win men back for Christ and His service. It has been well said with regard to the attitude of the Church's membership and of many of its attempts to exercise discipline : " When a scandal comes to light in a Christian congregation—when one of

* *The Story of Social Christianity*, F. H. Stead (2 vols.)

its members is discovered in a fault gross, palpable and offensive—what is the significance of that movement of feeling which inevitably takes place? In how many has it the character of goodness and of severity, of condemnation and of compassion, of love and fear, of pity and shame, the only character that has any virtue in it to tell for the sinner's recovery? If you ask nine people out of ten what a scandal is, they will tell you it is something which makes talk; and the talk in nine cases out of ten will be malignant, affected, more interesting to the talkers than any story of virtue or piety—scandal itself, in short, far more truly than its theme. Does anybody imagine that gossip is one of the forces that awaken conscience and work for the redemption of our fallen brethren? If this is all we can do, in the name of all that is Christian let us keep silence. Every word spoken about a brother's sin that is not prompted by a Christian conscience, that does not vibrate with the love of a Christian heart, is itself a sin against the mercy and the judgment of Christ."* In short, if that is not an untrue description of the Church's usual reaction to

* Denney, *Expositor's Bible*, II Corinthians, page 75.

offenders, what is required is a greater approximation on the part of the Church to that mind which was in Christ Jesus.

When we look at Jesus we see that He was ceaselessly exercising the pressure of a discipline which was sensitive to every kind of departure from the will of God, but unfailingly sympathetic to all sinners, whom it was His untiring purpose to win back to God and the sonship for which they had been made. The true spirit of discipline is revealed in some of the best known and most moving of the gospel stories. Against the legalism of Simon, which fortified itself in its own superiority by a sneer, Jesus asserted the winning power of the love which understood, the love which, being holiness in action, was able to say, not only "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but also, "Go and sin no more." The social outcast of Jericho's respectable society had only been hardened in his exactions by their excommunication ; the Jesus who wanted to come and share his meal roused by that mere act of fellowship the manful determination to try to do the decent thing once more. The censorious veil of the impeccable fell from the faces of the accusers of

the adulterous woman, when Jesus, feeling her shame as even she had not hitherto done, as they could never do, bade the first among them who was sure of his own purity to cast the fatal stone.

The entire record of Jesus' dealing with His disciples is a lesson in such a tireless, patient, and utterly sympathetic discipline as that to which His Body is called. He made them see as never before their intolerance, their quarrelsome spirit, their pride, their lack of understanding ; but whether by rebuke, or by undertaking Himself the lowly office of their servant, or by such an action as setting a child in their midst, He made them continually aware not only of their offence but of the wound that it inflicted on His more sensitive spirit, aware not merely of their sin but of a sympathy which was great enough to understand, to forgive, and to create the passionate desire for amendment.

That He failed with one did not alter His method of treatment even of that one. The sublimest act of discipline ever recorded was an act that failed to achieve its end. It was when Jesus took the sop, sign of the honour done to the

chiefest guest at his table, and handed it to Judas. Not till the supreme effort of love has been made and has failed does Jesus speak any word that even hints at abandonment.

How truly His Spirit was guiding His Church to the same sensitiveness and sympathy is evident in the letters of Paul, whose almost passionate delicacy in the treatment of erring individuals is one of the facets of his highly developed and finely tempered Christian nature which seems to elude many of his interpreters. It would be impossible to conceive a better example of Christian discipline effectively at work than that which forms a main theme of his two letters to the church at Corinth. An offence of so peculiarly gross a nature had taken place that the church felt instinctively that its very life was endangered if no swift reaction of the Christian conscience followed it, and that with unsparing condemnation. But in Paul's whole treatment of the case there is no suggestion that he is the one to exercise discipline, or that its aim is to be mere condemnation. It is to be an act of the entire Christian community ; and even though their judgment agree with that which Paul

feels it necessary to pronounce, involving the consigning of the offender's flesh to destruction, yet its aim is to be "that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus."

The tenderness of Paul's tone in approaching the difficult subject, his claim to be their father in Christ, the obvious and heart-felt sorrow which the offence has caused him, and the unaffected joy with which he hails the news that their exercise of discipline has been effective, all these are marks of his possession of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And it is noteworthy that as he has told the community that it is their function to exercise discipline even to the point of excommunication, so it is with their forgiveness of the offender that he identifies himself; "If you forgive the man, I forgive him too; I beg you to reinstate him in your love." "In this association of Christ, of the Corinthians, and of himself, in the work of forgiveness and restoration, Paul is really encompassing a desponding soul with all the grace of earth and heaven. Surely he will not let his grief become despair, when all around him and above him there is a present and convincing witness that, though God is intolerant of

sin, He is the refuge of the penitent" (Denney *in loc.*).

Almost any of the Pauline letters might be taken to illustrate similarly the tenderness of his concern for the souls' health of those for whom he is especially responsible (though everywhere he impresses upon the Christian fellowship that their responsibility is as real as his), the inexorable demand that he makes for holiness after the pattern and rising towards the measure and stature of Christ, but always coupled with an inexhaustible patience in waiting upon a growth which of its very nature must be slow, with an unwearying insistence on that primal Christian fact that we, to whom so much has been forgiven, must ourselves be always ready to forgive.

And with his general grasp of principle there goes just that nice appreciation of individual cases, of the infinite adaptiveness of the Christian moral demand to the peculiar circumstances in which men find themselves as the result of their character, their circumstances, and their misdoings which make his letters a rich mine of Christian casuistry in the high and right sense of a much-abused word. Every case of discipline is an

exercise in Christian casuistry ; for the Christian has not yet come to the alphabet of his dealing with others, or of understanding of his Lord, if he fail to recognize that the judgment of Christ must always take into account the individual man or woman, and the features of every case that make it different from every other case that has ever occurred.

No nobler example of this fine discrimination of Paul can be cited than his most effective use of Christian discipline in his letter to Philemon. In the compass of a brief note he manages to do justice to everything that is relevant ; the ancient standing of master to slave ; the new relationship into which Christ has brought all men who believe in Him ; the aggravation of Onesimus' offence in adding theft to desertion ; the close intimacy Philemon and Paul have shared, based on the supreme service Paul had rendered to Philemon in bringing him to Christ ; the financial restitution that will be forthcoming should it be deemed necessary ; the strong conviction (conveyed in the Greek by a playful use of punning epithets) that " Un-profitable " Onesimus, who had so belied his name, was giving an earnest of

his good intention to be "Profitable" in more than name by his ready willingness to return to his master ; and the all-enveloping atmosphere of Christian kindliness, suitable to such an one as " the old man, Paul," a prisoner, with a prisoner's right to plead for all captives, and to feel for their aspiration after liberty.

This is the grand manner ; and if it were essayed more frequently in the Church of Jesus, discipline would once more become a reality.

The relevance of this discussion of the true nature and methods of discipline to the manifestations of human love and the difficulties and problems to which its exercise gives rise may now have become apparent. While, as has been freely admitted, the discipline of the church must have within its view the whole of human life, and all the relationships into which men enter with one another, it can surely be claimed that in the fields which we have especially sought to traverse a discipline rightly conceived and exercised would have a special function in giving right attitudes to immature members of the church towards all the problems that arise in relating the fact of sex to all the other facts of life and human

nature ; in aiding those of the church's members who by lack of knowledge or faults of temper are conspicuously failing to acquit themselves as Christians in these intimate and difficult relationships ; in making the church the testing place of the individual conscience in cases where failure has been gross and palpable ; and above all, in surrounding those who have failed in the proper handling of their sex life with a wall, not of envenomed criticism and scandalous gossip, but of that sympathetic contrition which feels the failure of one member to be the failure of all, and of that resolute love which never faileth.

In a church fellowship worthy of the name growing girls and lads would not be left to flounder among the nascent passions of their adolescence without the provision of accurate knowledge, worthy ideals, and the shelter of that warm friendship by which the danger of a too early acquaintance with the merely physical aspect of the passion of love is most naturally and easily averted.

Where these positive aids to clean living have failed, a true fellowship would not look askance at the girl who has already given the heaviest

possible of hostages to fortune by assuming the undesired task of motherhood without the ennobling dignity of wifehood, but would consider her as in an especial way the object of the church's consideration and care. She would not be left to bear alone the heavy consequences of her lapse, but would be surrounded by those, already marked out by previous friendship and knowledge, who would help her to win back the pride of her womanhood.

It is a notoriously difficult task to intervene between man and wife ; but the Church is in the world to do things that without God are impossible. And can the Church feel itself free of all blame when the characters that it has professed to train, under Christ, for all the tasks of life, prove themselves plainly inadequate to that task which has received the supreme sanction of being made a symbol of the union of the Church with Christ Himself ? That it is difficult does not mean that for Christians it is impossible, far less that it should never be attempted. Are there not in most congregations, men and women deeply schooled in life and greatly endowed with grace (in its true and original sense of graciousness)

whose friendship might very readily make advice something very different from the sheer impertinence that it is apt to seem when it is rendered in a merely official way, or when it lacks the constraint of love?

It must be insisted again that there is no place in the New Testament for any type of discipline that is merely official; that the right people for the exercise of its discipline need not necessarily be priests, or ministers, or office-bearers of any sort whatever; but that the Christian community ought to recognize now, as it did at the beginning, that the gifts with which the Spirit has endowed the Church are very various indeed. And when Paul numbers among them "healers" and "helpers," may he not be summoning some in our congregations to just such tasks as the gentle letting-in of daylight upon the selfishness of a husband, or the persuasion of a young and inexperienced wife by an older and wiser woman that she does not yet know all that marriage ought to imply when it is looked at in the light of Christ and His Cross?

Surely when misunderstanding has grown so great that those who were once married lovers

even begin to think of the rude surgery of divorce, the church of their common membership has a right to its say before they carry their contentions to the law court. There must have been gross mismanagement of at least one life, and more probably of two, before even the possibility of such a defeat of all that Christian love stands for can be so much as thought upon ; and the church which has the names of such men and women upon its roll of membership will certainly not stand blameless when their cause is tried at a greater assize.

It may be said with truth that such cases are infrequent in our existing congregations ; but they are not infrequent outside ; and the question which is pressing more and more heavily upon the mind and conscience of every branch of the Church is just this : why should so much passionate and redeemable life be running to sheer waste when in the body of Christ the spirit which won and held and redeemed just such people when He was here on earth ought to be reclaiming it for God just as He did ? It is becoming evident, as has been already stated, that even those who write and speak most clamorously in

the name of freedom are beginning to realize that neither promiscuity nor the divorce court can cure the ills which misguided expressions of human love are producing on every side in our modern life.

But a church which realizes in its own membership that human love is at its best and deepest only a reflection of the love of God has indeed the power of the keys ; it can open the kingdom of heaven which is love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit of Jesus to all who are willing to believe in Him.

The Church *can* answer the questions which arise in connection with human love ; but its answer will be satisfactory and convincing only in the measure of its own revelation to men and women of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

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